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THE MODERN DRAMA

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An Essay in Interpretation

BY

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TO MY WIFE

158234

Im Grunde bleibt kein realer Gegenstand unpoetisch, sobald der Dichter ihn gehörig zu gebrauchen weiss.

GOETHE.

PREFACE

With a few honourable exceptions books about books are apt, at present in America, to be anything but critical. An account of the modern drama, therefore, that aims at historical orderliness and intellectual coherence need not, perhaps, offer an excuse for its existence. My study is not one of phases or aspects but of the whole subject which I have attempted to grasp and to interpret as a whole. If I have succeeded in any measure, this volume should prove of real usefulness to students, teachers and critics of the drama.

I have omitted any discussion of the theatre of Italy and Spain. No criticism can be fruitful which is not based on an intimate acquaintance with the idiom which that literature employs. But this omission represents no absolute loss. Italy and Spain have followed and exemplified the tendencies and methods of the modern theatre. They have neither changed them nor originated others.

With the exception of a few lines from *The*

Sunken Bell, the translations of all quotations, in verse and prose, are my own.

This volume has been written amid the pressing tasks of a busy teacher and editor. It owes the possibility of its existence largely to the friendly interest shown me by Mr. Julius Rosenwald of Chicago.

LUDWIG LEWISOHN.

Columbus, O.,
February, 1915.

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THE MODERN DRAMA

CHAPTER ONE

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE MODERN DRAMA

I

The dramatic literature of the last three decades, which it is the purpose of these pages to describe and to interpret, may be called the modern drama in no loose or inaccurate sense. In all ages the drama, through its portrayal of the acting and suffering spirit of man, has been more closely allied than any other art to his deeper thoughts concerning his nature and his destiny. When, therefore, during the third quarter of the nineteenth century, these thoughts underwent a profound and radical change, it was inevitable that this change should be communicated to the drama and should reshape its content, its technique and its aim. The result is that art of the theatre for

which modern is the briefest and most convenient term.

Traditionally the serious drama deals with the transgression of an immutable moral law by a self-originating will. The tragic action began with or, more usually, rose toward the incurring of that tragic guilt, and ended with the protagonist's expiation of his transgression. Thence resulted the triple effect of tragedy: The compassion aroused for human frailty, the warning addressed to the equal frailty of our own wills, and the vindication of the moral order native to the spectator in that age and country in which the tragedy was produced.

This account of the nature of the historic drama is, essentially, the Aristotelian one. It describes, however, not only *Œdipus the King* or the conscious imitations of the Attic stage, but with equal exactness the great Shakespearean tragedies, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Lear*, and such later and inferior but still authentic examples of tragedy as Schiller's *Wallenstein*. In each instance, in the words of the Sophoclean chorus:

> "All-seeing Time hath caught
> Guilt, and to justice brought;"

in each instance the poet is conscious of an abso-

lute moral order affronted by the will of man; in each instance the destruction of the protagonist reconciles the spectator to a universe in which guilt is punished and justice is upheld.

The free scientific and philosophical inquiry of the later nineteenth century, however, rendered the traditional principles of tragedy wholly archaic. It became clear that the self-originating element in human action is small. The individual acts in harmony with his character, which is largely the result of complex and uncontrollable causes. It became even clearer that among the totality of moral values an absolute validity can be assigned to a few only. Hence the basic conception of tragic guilt was undermined from within and from without. The transgression of an immutable moral law by a self-originating will was seen to be an essentially meaningless conception, since neither an eternally changeless moral law nor an uncaused volition is to be found in the universe that we perceive.

Thus the emphasis of the drama was shifted from what men do to what they suffer. A questioning attitude exercised itself upon nature and upon society. Tragedy was seen to arise not from the frailty or rebellion of a corrupted will defying the changeless moral order, but from the

pressure upon the fluttering and striving will of outworn custom, of unjust law, of inherited instinct, of malevolent circumstance. If the symbol of historic tragedy may be found in Othello's poignant cry of self-accusation:

> "I kiss'd thee ere I kill'd thee;—no way but this,
> Killing myself, to die upon a kiss,"

with its acquiescence in retributive justice as re-establishing the moral harmony of the world,—so may the symbol of modern tragedy be found in those great words with which Beatrice Cenci goes to meet her fate:

> "My pangs are of the mind, and of the heart,
> And of the soul; ay, of the inmost soul,
> Which weeps within tears as of burning gall
> To see, in this ill world where none are true,
> My kindred false to their deserted selves,
> And with considering all the wretched life
> Which I have lived, and its now wretched end,
> And the small Justice shown by Heaven and Earth
> To me and mine; and what a tyrant thou art,
> And what slaves these; and what a world we make,
> The oppressor and the opprest . . ."

For modern tragedy consists in man's failure to achieve that peace with his universe which marks the close of *Œdipus the King* or of *Othello*. Such endings in the drama correspond to a state

of religious or moral certitude in the playwright and the audience. The loss of that certitude, the crying out after a reconciliation with an uncomprehended world—this it is that constitutes tragedy in the modern drama. The tragic idea in *Ghosts*, in *La Course du Flambeau*, in *Rose Bernd*, in *Strife*, is not based upon a fearful sense of human frailty or guilt and a final acquiescence in its punishment. It is based upon a vision of the apparently "small justice shown by heaven and earth" and of "what a world we make, the oppressor and the opprest." Thence result those endings in the modern drama which are still felt by the uninstructed to be inconclusive and disconcerting. But these endings are, in the truest sense, both artistic and philosophical. They interpret our incertitude, our aspiration and search for ultimate values. Historic tragedy deals with man's disloyalty to his moral universe and the re-establishment of harmony through retribution. Modern tragedy deals with his perception of a world in which such things can be and such things be endured and in which, nevertheless, he must strive, if he would live at all, to be at home.

This conception of the nature of tragedy made for a thorough-going change in the technique of the modern drama. An ascending action that

culminates in the incurring or revelation of guilt and a descending action that closes in its expiation could no longer be used in the dramatic interpretation of human life. The structure of the drama becomes far simpler, following the natural rhythm of that life itself, seeking to come upon reality and understand some fragment of it, hesitating to rearrange the data of experience in the light of an anterior ethical assumption.

Thus, too, in the pursuit of its realities the modern drama has had to abandon any arbitrary division of the stuff of life into sections fit or unfit for artistic treatment. For by what criterion is such fitness or unfitness to be determined? Wherever human beings strive and suffer—there is drama! And so our playwrights have enormously extended the subject-matter of the theatre, and have vindicated the spiritual and artistic values that lurk in the common lives of men.

Such are the primary characteristics of the modern drama which the reader will recognise again and again in these pages; such are the ideas and methods which differentiate it from the drama of the past—a conception of tragedy as inhering in the nature of things rather than in the deeds of men, a large simplicity of technique, the con-

quest of vast regions of life for the interpretation of art.

II

The whole modern development in the art of the theatre is prophetically summed up in the career of Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906). It will be seen, I think, when the tumult of contemporary judgment merges into the quiet certitude of posterity, that a few of his successors in the modern drama have surpassed him in reality and mystery, in sweetness and in insight. But behind them and their fellows stands that cold, gigantic figure with all the visions of its age in its unshadowed eyes. Or all but one. For there is, characteristically, no hint in Ibsen of that sympathy with the disinherited of the social order which has so deeply influenced the modern stage.

He began with plays in the romantic tradition communicated to Scandinavia by the Germanised Dane, Œhlenschläger. Through the medium of verse and a semi-romantic technique, he proceeded to embody the central and controlling idea of all his work positively in *Brand* (1866), negatively in *Peer Gynt* (1867). With the one notable exception of *Emperor and Galilean* (1873)

he now turned his attention to the objective delineation of contemporary reality. With *The Wild Duck* (1884) however, a strong symbolic element begins to invade his observation of the actual, an element which grows steadily during the succeeding years until in his dramatic epilogue, *When We Dead Awaken* (1899), it has become coextensive with his art. Romanticism, naturalism, symbolism—these three stages mark the history of modern literature as they mark the work of Ibsen. And this development corresponds to the parallel development in modern thought from the post-Kantian idealists, through the scientific positivism of Comte and Spencer, to the neo-idealism of Bergson, James and Eucken.

The modern drama, in its stricter sense, however, does not arise until both romantic technique and romantic philosophy have been more or less definitely discarded. Hence we may disregard the plays of Ibsen that precede 1869, and consider at once the body of dramatic work which began, in that year, with *The League of Youth* and ended with *When We Dead Awaken.*

The initial impulse of Ibsen's mature work was an impulse of protest against the social and spiritual conditions in his native country. It is fairly

easy to reconstruct these conditions from *The League of Youth*, *The Pillars of Society* (1877) and from Björnson's *The New System* (1879). There arises from these plays the picture of a small and isolated society in a state of cruel internal competition. Men struggle meanly for mean advantages; the minutest differences in wealth and station are emphasised with all the bitterness of insecurity; the whole social structure is based upon a rigid orthodoxy in morals and religion which maintains itself with the stealthy ferocity that belongs to growing impotence and smouldering panic. Prosperous persons uphold a cast-iron respectability that is often at variance with their own past. Nowhere a breath of largeness or generous thought or free sincerity; so that even unashamed lawlessness would have cleared the spiritual atmosphere made heavy and murky by these parochial potentates and their time-servers. Therefore does the ultra-idealist Brand cry out:

> "Even if as slave of lust thou serve,
> Then be that slave without reserve!
> Not this to-day, to-morrow that,
> And something new with each year's flight:
> Be what thou art with all thy might,
> Not piecemeal!"

And therefore Ibsen declared in a letter written in 1870: "The principal thing is that one remain veracious and faithful in one's relation to oneself. The great thing is not to will one thing rather than another, but to will that which one is absolutely impelled to will, because one is oneself and cannot do otherwise. Anything else will drag us into deception." It was against such deception that Ibsen's cold and analytic wrath was turned to the end of his career—deception that was fostered, in Björnson's words "in small souls amid small circumstances who develop wretchedly and monotonously like turnips in a bed."

By 1870, then, Ibsen's impulse of protest against Norwegian society had crystallised into a doctrine of extraordinary power and import: "The great thing is not to will one thing rather than another." In these simple words he shifts the whole basis of human conduct, denies the supremacy of any ethical criterion, social or religious, sweeps aside the conception of absolute guilt and hence undermines the foundations of the historic drama in its views of man. From this negative pronouncement he proceeds at once to the positive. The great thing is "to will that which one is absolutely impelled to will, because one is oneself and cannot do otherwise. Any-

thing else will drag us into deception." It is to be observed that Ibsen, who began as a romantic writer, does not greatly stress, theoretically or creatively, the positivistic limitations of the human will. He desires that will to act in utter freedom, guided by no law but that of its own nature, having no aim but complete sincerity in its effort after self-realisation.

This doctrine which, embodied in play after play, stirred and cleansed the spiritual atmosphere of Europe, is not as anarchic as it may superficially appear. For Ibsen desires the purest and most ideal volitions of the individual to prevail. His great and grave warning is not to let these volitions be smothered or turned awry by material aims, by base prudence, by sentimental altruism, or by social conventions external to the purely willing soul. For every such concession leads to untruth which is the death both of the individual and of society.

It follows almost inevitably—for Ibsen was nothing if not tenacious and single of purpose—that his plays are a series of culminations, tragic culminations of the effects of untruth born of some impure or materialised or basely intimidated will. And it is almost equally inevitable that this perversion of the will is often illustrated

through the relation of the sexes in which law and custom, prejudice and social pressure, have most tragically wrenched the impulses of the free individual. Thus Ibsen, adhering with iron consistency to his central belief, inaugurates all the basic problems and moral protests of the modern drama.

His characteristic theory of life received its first mature embodiment in *The Pillars of Society* (1877). The worm-eaten structure of Bernick's life which crumbles as the action of the play proceeds, is built upon the two base refusals of his youth to accept, with all their consequences, the free impulses of his personality. He denies himself Lona, the woman of his true choice, and throws upon another the burden of his relations with Mrs. Dorf. Not the error of his passion, be it observed, contributes to his downfall, but his cowardice in face of the realities of his own soul. By various dramaturgic methods, to be noted presently, the brittle quality of his existence is brought home to him. His purification culminates in the vital saying: "The spirit of truth and the spirit of freedom—these are the pillars of society."

In *A Doll's House* (1879) Ibsen illustrated his theory of life through a subtle inversion of his

method. The culmination here consists in Nora's awakening to the fact that, dazed by social conventions, by the traditions of the sheltered life and its ignorance, she has never been able to be a freely willing personality. Hence she discards a past woven of actions and acquiescences which are, in no deep or intimate sense, her own. But Ibsen returns to his more usual procedure in his tragic masterpiece *Ghosts* (1881). The more than Thyestian horrors of that brief and fateful action spring pitilessly from a concession to that external social morality which the blind world approves. This is the lesson which, through the silent years, has burned itself into Mrs. Alving's soul. She shrinks from nothing, now, that society abhors. But it is far too late. Duty and piety throttled her will in the crucial moments of the past. She can but watch the bursting of their dreadful fruit. In the polemic *Enemy of the People* (1882) the conspiracy of an entire society against an undaunted will is shown, and the play ends upon the magnificent and characteristic note: "He is the strongest man in the world who stands alone." *The Wild Duck* (1884) exhibits, not too clearly or powerfully, a variety of characters corrupted by insufficient sincerity of free self-hood. *Rosmersholm* (1886), on the other

hand, is but slightly touched with Ibsen's finer qualities as a thinker and dramatic artist. It is, at bottom, a conventional tragedy of fate and crime and retribution, distinguished only by the subtler *timbre* of his workmanship.

It is, perhaps, not without some special significance that after the disloyalty committed against his nobler and more enduring method in *Rosmersholm*, Ibsen should have given his central doctrine its purest and most exquisite expression in his next play: *The Lady from the Sea* (1888). The play is, in truth, the key to his work by virtue of its clear and almost poetical expression of his dominant mood and doctrine. The fable is of the utmost simplicity; the symbolism is not only searching but clear. Never as in the more famous *Master Builder* (1892) is the meaning distorted by misleading and contradictory elements. The lure of the sea which Ellida Wangel feels is the call of freedom; the Stranger is the projection of her untrammelled will. She had not followed Wangel at the dictate of a native impulse. Hence she is not acclimated to the life of her home, and all the unlived possibilities of a freer choosing tug at her heart. That psychical strain necessarily culminates in a situation symbolised by the last coming of the

Stranger. As Ibsen most truly points out: no soul can rob another of its freedom of choice, but can at most brutally prevent the translation of choice into action. A gleam of that truth comes to Wangel. Sincerely he offers Ellida her liberty at the final moment and, free at last to choose, she seeks the security of a familiar home, and the wild lure of the great sea-spaces can trouble her no more.

No hint of his deeper purpose is to be found in the carefully elaborated portrait of that ignoble egotist Hedda Gabler (1890), and not more than broken hints in the curiously overrated *Master Builder*. The play has passages that promise momently to exhale a haunting power, a subtle truth. But they never do. The symbolism radiates a feeble and flickering light in several directions which, in the last analysis, illuminates nothing. It is possible to whet one's cleverness on *The Master Builder*, not to impart to it a steadiness of aim and execution that is not there.

In his last three plays Ibsen returns to his characteristic motives. The tragedy of *Little Eyolf* (1894) is ultimately rooted in the fact that Allmers drifted into his marriage with Rita and did not purely choose her from all the world: the quaint and sombre happenings in *John Gabriel*

Borkman (1896) can all be traced to the days in which Borkman denied his profoundest impulse and sold Ella for the mean advantages of the world; the sick souls of Rubeck and Irene in *When We Dead Awaken* (1899) die because they had denied their real selves. "What is irrevocable we see only when we dead awaken." Maja and Ulfheim, on the other hand, find an abundant life even in the death of the body because they meet that death in a union of complete self-affirmation. They have "willed that which they were absolutely impelled to will, because they were themselves and could not do otherwise."

The very literally epoch-making trenchancy of Ibsen's revolt against the accepted morality of social man is somewhat obscured by the quietness of his manner. His medium is strangely unemphatic; his rebels strangely unimpassioned. The cry of Nora is the most ringing in all his plays and it is by no means the most convincing. Rebecca West and Rita Allmers are deeply shaken, but they are shaken by the desires of love, not by the love of their free desires. Nevertheless, the eminent Norseman's contribution to the guidance of modern life is unmistakable in its final clearness. The denial of one's sincerest self, even though made in the service of what men call mor-

ality and institute as law, is an unmixed evil. It corrupts the soul that is guilty of it and infects others. Society cannot be purified until it is a society of free, self-directing personalities.

This theory of life is, of course, like every other, insufficient, and stresses some human qualities at the expense of others. The greater number of human aims must necessarily be collective and requires a measurable restraint and a directing of the individual impulse. It is open to small doubt, on the other hand, that Ibsen's gospel of the free personality swept like a current of cleansing autumn storm into the prejudice and convention-ridden life of the great middle classes through the eighteen-hundred and seventies and eighties, and that he is still an awakener and a herald of liberty and sincerity in the personal life. Nor is his influence likely to decrease. Democracy which began by liberating man politically has developed a dangerous tendency to enslave him through the tyranny of majorities and the deadly power of their opinion. These majorities pass restrictive laws which sap the moral fibre of society and seek to reduce it to the standards of its most worthless elements. They abhor the free and self-originating soul—the solitary thinker, fighter, reformer, saint—and exalt the

colourless product of the uniform herd. In a society face to face with such dangers the works of Ibsen have an inestimable service to perform. They will continue to shape free personalities and help such personalities to find themselves.

In his character as a dramatic artist I am inclined to question the perfection which modern criticism is wont to ascribe to Ibsen. His workmanship, in reality, is very unequal, ranging from the pure and proud austerity of *Ghosts* to the trivial intrigue in *The Pillars of Society* and *John Gabriel Borkman*, at both extremes of his career. In the former play the procession in honour of Bernick at the moment when he has awakened to the hollowness of his life, the song that announces the departure of the unseaworthy ship, the dreadful suspicion that Dina and John have embarked on it, the actual embarkation and immediate rescue of Olaf—all these are structural tricks of the crassest kind and derived from the creaking mechanism of the theatre according to Sarcey. Hardly less factitious are the elements of dark intrigue that are finally disentangled in *John Gabriel Borkman*. And even in *Little Eyolf* Ibsen stoops to the devices of unexpectedly discovered documents holding a melodramatic revelation, and of a sudden psychical turn-about

on the part of Rita for the sake of a satisfactory and quite unbelievable ending. Nor, finally, can it be forgotten that the feverish suspense during long passages of *A Doll's House* is sustained by the external and time-honoured device of a letter known to be on its fatal mission, and that the last three acts of *Rosmersholm* are structurally the gradual revelation of an antecedent crime.

No, Ibsen was not an impeccable technician. Never, at any period of his career, did he long free himself from the mechanical structure, the fortuitous externalities of the older French stage. Nevertheless, he was in his own time the earliest and the greatest master of modern dramaturgy. And he produced at least one faultless masterpiece in *Ghosts*.

His very great and, for their time, quite new achievements as a dramatic artist consist in his structural economy, his rejection of formal exposition, his creation of atmosphere, and his adherence to the rhythm of the drama. He gains intensity by concentration, not by noisy climaxes or rattling curtains. In *The Pillars of Society*, *Hedda Gabler* and, practically, in *Rosmersholm*, he preserves the unity of place; in *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts* and *John Gabriel Borkman*, the unities of both time and place. That the mod-

ern drama, seeking to produce the illusion of reality, should return to the pseudo-Aristotelian unities was natural. And in this drama they assume a new function and a new importance which Ibsen was the first to exemplify. Equally notable is his rejection of the older method of formal exposition. That convention permitted characters at the opening of a play or act to relate to each other, but for the benefit of the audience, facts of which, by the very assumptions of the action, they were thoroughly aware. The scenes between the Marquis de Presle and his friend in the first act of Augier's *Le Gendre de M. Poirier* furnish a classical example of this convention. It is instructive, by contrast, to observe the method of exposition used in *Ghosts*. The facts which the audience must know in that play are the true character of Alving, the nature of Oswald's malady and the origin of Regina. Now these facts are communicated to the audience by being tragically and inevitably revealed to characters necessarily ignorant of them. Thus in the first act Manders learns the story of Alving's real life; in the second act Mrs. Alving is told the secret of Oswald's heritage; in the third act Regina is enlightened as to her parentage. There is no speech or gesture directed at the audience. The

drama has withdrawn into its own intense reality and is no longer heard but overheard.

Ibsen is the creator or, at least, the first constant practitioner of the elaborate stage-direction by which the modern dramatist seeks to fix the aspect and mood of the environment in which his people act and suffer. In his use of them, these directions do not yet attain that blending of largeness in purpose and exactness in detail given them by the later naturalists. Nor have his scenes their variety and warmth. Even the ocean, which glimmers so often in the background of his settings, has not the multitudinous energy and grandeur of a living sea. It is still and brackish, and there are no stars over it. But in the matter of stage-direction, as of economy in structure, organic exposition and a continuity of dramatic rhythm unbroken by "asides" or monologues or scene-divisions, Ibsen has the priority, and maintains his prophetic station in the history of the modern stage.

According to a current and popular critical error which merges the dramatist into the superior stage-carpenter, dialogue is the least considerable element in the making of a play. A moment's unprejudiced reflection will at once reveal the fact that it is the one permanent quality in dramatic

art. The fable and the structure of the drama both undergo inevitable changes from age to age with the change of manners, interests, and with successive transformations in the mechanism of theatrical production. In the dialogue are crystallised the abiding elements of the drama—the projection of character, and the terms upon which the spiritual struggle of the characters is enacted. It is by virtue of the expressiveness of their medium that *Electra*, *Hamlet*, *Le Misanthrope*, and even *The Weavers* are not only for an age but for all time. And it is by his failure in dialogue that Ibsen misses greatness as a dramatist. Not that dialogue need be beautiful or, in any conventional sense, eloquent. The piercing reality of dramatic speech found in a few of the modern naturalists, with its intense embodiment of human sorrow and human aspiration, has a grave and searching beauty of its own. Ibsen's dialogue has neither high poetry nor dense reality; he has neither poetically interpreted nor faithfully imitated the speech of men. His characters discourse in curiously level tones, with their vision, apparently, always fixed upon some blankness in space and never passionately arrested by the business in hand. A play of Ibsen's acted in any language, seems at once to infect the actors with

that insidious monotony. They speak like somnambulists, without modulation or fervour. I have used the word unemphatic. It returns to the mind often in dealing with Ibsen. I can think of no writer of equal rank in the history of literature so lacking in energy, in passion and in charm. Yet there he stands in his cold sturdiness, dominating and foreshadowing the whole of the modern drama by his priority in untheatrical severity of craftsmanship, and by the magnificence of his moral protest—to be surpassed, perhaps already surpassed, by the men who were to come after him, but never to be neglected or set aside.

Like his greater contemporary and countryman, Ibsen, Björnstjerne Björnson (1832–1910), began as a romantic playwright. Again like Ibsen he felt the impact of realism that marked the mid-century and produced *The Newly Married Couple* in 1865. The poet and dreamer in him occasionally came to the foreground, as in *The King* (1877); but, upon the whole, Björnson may be classed among the realists of the modern drama.

His character as a man and artist is not difficult to disengage. He lacked Ibsen's incisive intelligence; he was the burly, boyish enthusiast of

peace, progress, purity—of all the fine, intoxicating symbols of the social awakening of his day, rarely penetrating, I think, beyond the word and the obvious glow and dreams which it induced. He was generous, kindly, chivalric, patriotic—far more eager, in Bishop Wilson's great saying, to live up to what light he had, and clamorously to make it prevail than to question whether that light was not, after all, darkness. The contemporary praise and popularity of such a character, aided by a pleasing personality freely displayed, was inevitable. It is equally inevitable that a critical adjustment of his qualities and position should follow.

Largely, and from the first, he was a propagandist through the medium of the stage. Yet for this special task his natural endowment was the most inadequate. His thinking is never close; his vision of life is never unblurred by his moral enthusiasm. It is easy to imagine how M. Paul Hervieu would shatter the amiable dramatic assertions of Björnson. *A Gauntlet* (1883) illustrates his qualities as a thinker and artist. The structure is effective without being unduly theatrical. The second act, it is interesting to observe, ends with a cry that is literally and dramaturgically identical with the cry that

ends the second act of M. Brieux's *Les Avariés* (*Damaged Goods*). The characters in *A Gauntlet* are not without reality or charm. But the theme of the play is the iniquity of the double standard of sexual morality. Now this is a question of quite enormous difficulty. For the double standard has not been established by an act of the human will; it is the result of vast and ancient forces, biological, moral and economic, which have been operative throughout human history and are operative to-day. Hence, to deal with the problem it is necessary to betray a consciousness, at least, of these forces, and to discuss their possible deflection. Björnson does nothing of the kind. He has discovered a wrong, an apparent lack of equity in human life, and he proceeds to demolish it outright. Alfred Christensen, despite the fact that he has had a mistress, declares that he loves Svava truly and faithfully. And Svava's mother asks: "Suppose a woman, under the same circumstances, had come and said the same thing—who would believe her?" And Björnson was quite oblivious of the fact that the problem had not even been touched until one had accounted for the immemorial instincts and traditions, common to all mankind, which would dictate the answer to Mrs. Riis's question. Such

doctrinaire dealing with life is really a remnant of the old romanticism on its side of social and ethical theorising.

Björnson was happier in the treatment of more solid and less debatable subjects. Thus *A Bankruptcy* (1874) is vigorous and convincing. It has some of the stuff of human life in it and has been the most successful of his plays. His masterpiece, on the other hand, is probably the first part of *Beyond Our Strength* (1883). Here he grasped a situation and a problem of high spiritual import. No solution was possible. But the statement is dramatic and poetic at once. Of especial charm and truth is the discussion of the clergymen in the second act. Nowhere else does Björnson feel and reason with such delicate justness. His religious perceptions had deeper roots than his sociological opinions. Hence this dramatic apologue of the relations of Christianity to the miraculous is his least questionable contribution to the modern drama.

Björnson's dramatic craftsmanship is usually sound, if rarely remarkable. His best plays are solidly built; his dialogue is adequate if no more. But nowhere, except in *Beyond our Strength*, does one feel oneself in the presence of that high intensity which, whether in the reproduction or in-

terpretation of life, is the mark of every great dramatic impulse or method.

The circle of the moderns—from romanticism through naturalism to symbolism—was also described by August Strindberg (1849–1912). But the heart of his immense productivity lies, I take it, in his naturalistic period. His symbolism dislimns into mere phantasmagoria. But between 1887 and 1897 he wrote a group of plays which belong to the most memorable products of the naturalistic drama.

One cannot span that tortured and potent spirit by a formula or a phrase. The secret of his uncanny power, however, lay clearly in his unequalled capacity for suffering. "Observation," Balzac wrote to Mme. Hanska, "springs from suffering. Our memory registers only what gives us pain." Strindberg's memory clung with a cruel and self-tormenting tenacity to what had given him pain. The result is an observation of life from which we avert our eyes—shamed by its merciless truth. No dream or delusion could corrupt that soul made remorseless by its own anguish. He lays bare his characters nerve by nerve and in each nerve laid bare is also the quiver of Strindberg's agony.

His art—the art of *The Father* (1887), *Comrades* (1888), *Miss Julia* (1888), *Creditors* (1890), *The Link* (1897)—is the most joyless in the world. There is no lifting of the soul to a larger vision from the bondage of immediate pain. That is his limitation. It may be urged, on the other hand, that the pain he describes is so keen and absorbing that it gives his characters no chance to fight their way to the breathing of an ampler air. And that, too, is life. For he has chosen to depict the cruelest malady of the age—the malady that has stolen into the ancient and honourable relations of the woman to the man.

He began with the severest consequence of this malady, which Hauptmann has also treated. So soon as the woman loses her sense of the man as friend, protector and, in the last analysis, arbiter, she is in the individual case stronger than he. Not the wife of the navvy; but the wife of the thoughtful gentleman, inhibited by ages of chivalric forbearance and defenceless against a primitive craft and tenacity which he has long outlived. Thus, in *The Father*, the man's will, the highest expression of his selfhood, is gradually corroded as by slow acid. As the captain says to his wife Laura: "Yes, you have a diabolical

power of making your will prevail; but such power always belongs to him who shrinks from no tactics." We are told that when Laura was a little girl she used to feign death to have her will. No doubt small boys are self-willed too. But as the male grows older he realises the compacts of society and the necessity for comradely human action. He fears injustice. The woman, tragically often, continues the tactics of the child and has the power of all unscrupulous and irrational forces. It is characteristic of the situation that the pivot of the struggle is the daughter of the captain and Laura. The captain desires to train Bertha for her own good; Laura to satisfy the girl's trivial desires and assert the ownership of her own motherhood.

Miss Julia is inferior to *The Father* in power and interest largely because the case it states is highly exceptional. And this order of art triumphs by the representative power of its concrete subject-matter. That power reasserts itself in *Comrades*, the acutest study in the modern drama of the gross delusion that marriage is possible on a basis of personal and professional separateness. For marriage, as Axel says in the play, must be founded upon common interests, not upon conflicting ones. And these common interests, in

normal and healthy unions, must be the home, the child and the man's work upon which the home and the family and all the historic civilisation of mankind are built. Here, on the contrary, is comradeship. Yet Berta does not even play that miserable game fairly. What woman, with the traditions of the sex behind her, could? And so while Axel does hack-work to pay the butcher and baker, she works at her art. The man finally gathers strength to escape.

The Maid: A young lady is waiting to see you, sir.
Axel: Very well; I'm at her service.
Berta: Is that a new comrade?
Axel: No, not a comrade, but a sweetheart!
Berta: And your future wife?
Axel: Perhaps! I like to meet a comrade at an inn; at home I want a wife. Excuse me!
Berta: Good-by, then. And so we are never to meet any more?
Axel: Why not? But only at an inn. Good-by!

Creditors is a variation on the same theme, even subtler and more searching in its analysis, though not so representative. Despite the passionate exaggeration of a soul that has suffered, Gustav succeeds in summing up the whole matter. "For, look you, the woman is the man's child. If she doesn't become his, he becomes hers and then we

have a topsy-turvy world." And, finally, in a sadder and mellower mood Strindberg once more exposed the utter misery of a modern "free" marriage in that masterpiece of dramaturgy and psychology, *The Link*.

"There are disharmonies in life," says Gustav in *Creditors*, "that cannot be resolved." Such disharmonies exist in modern marriage, and these Strindberg set himself the task of analysing. It is a shallow view that sees in him the mere misogynist. It is possible to have revered, beyond all human types, the wise mother, the kind wife, the ancient priestess of the human hearth, and yet to have written *Comrades* and *The Link*. For that type has presented itself immemorially to the imagination and experience of men. The predatory suffragette is a thing of yesterday and may soon be "with yesterday's seven thousand years." Yet for our own time these plays of Strindberg's are of the last importance. Amid much loose thinking and looser talking he set down the bare, frank truth. It may be impossible to refound that home in which man, from of old, has found his joy and peace; it may be necessary to shatter and remould anew the whole fabric of society and totally to change the relations of the sexes. That, however, is another

matter. It is a valorous deed to have shown that marriage and feminism—in its immediate and acrid sense—are incompatible.

This group of five plays has a further importance in the history of the modern drama. For the magnificent economy of his structure Strindberg had but the single example of *Ghosts* (1881) when he wrote *The Father* (1887). Earlier than any other playwright he grasped with full consciousness all the principles of modern dramaturgy—exclusion of intrigue, seamless continuity of structure, a dialogue that produces the illusion of real speech. He rightly asserts in the preface to *Miss Julia* (1888) that, as a naturalist, he has wholly abandoned the creation of labelled types and has shown the human soul in its boundless and troubled complexity and that he has avoided the symmetrical give and take of French dialogue "in order to let the brains of men work unhindered." It is equally noteworthy that all these dramas observe the unities of both time and place. These technical qualities, united to Strindberg's power of psychological analysis, tend to make the five pieces discussed his most solid contribution to dramatic literature. In poetry, in imagination, in variety and charm of matter, he is surpassed by many playwrights.

The sombre concentration with which he exposed the disharmonies which had hurt him most acutely —that stands alone.

III

The protest in favour of a new dramatic spirit and method was most persistent and most direct in France. For it was here that there had arisen, largely through the work of the indefatigable Eugène Scribe (1791–1861) a mere mechanic art of the theatre wholly divorced from reality either in life or thought. This drama, which amused all Europe, did not even in its heyday pass without sharp and just criticism. But the criticism was faintly voiced and proceeded only from a few of the finer spirits of the time. Thus, in his *Soirée perdue*, Alfred de Musset, as early as 1840, wrote lines which may be freely rendered as follows:

"Alone one night at the *Français* I sate;
The author's hit was less than moderate.
'Twas only Molière who, 'tis known, at best—
That blunderer who one day wrote *Alceste*—
Had not the art of tickling mind and hide
By serving a *dénoûement* cut and dried.
Thank heaven, our playwrights take another road,
And we prefer some drama *à la mode*,

Where the intrigue inextricably bound
Swings, like a toy, the same mechanic round."

Into this comedy of mere intrigue two men, Émile Augier (1820–1889) and Alexandre Dumas, *fils* (1824–1895), sought to inject the observation of manners and the power of moral reasoning. The history of the French stage from 1850 to 1880 is the history of their works. Under the influence, however, of the naturalistic movement in the novel, which was rendered illustrious soon after the middle of the century by the work of Gustave Flaubert, it was felt with a growing keenness that the theatre of Augier and Dumas was really incapable of either rendering or interpreting life. Both playwrights adhered in the structure of their pieces to the mechanic formula of Scribe, and Dumas invalidated his art by the eagerness of his polemics. In this condition of the theatre it was but natural that the novelists of the new school should have made the effort to transfer to it their methods and their ideals.

Those restless and intelligent souls, the Goncourt brothers, were first in the field. In their journal—that half-heroic, half-pathological record of the literary life—they have set down the high hopes, the heartburnings and the bitter dis-

illusion that attended the difficult production and noisy failure of their *Henriette Maréchal* in 1865. They were thoroughly aware of the degraded condition of the French drama in which, as Edmond de Goncourt explained, "I do not know a single *dénoûement* which is not brought about by the sudden overhearing of a conversation behind a curtain, or by the interception of a letter, or by some forced trick of that kind." Yet *Henriette Maréchal* itself closes with a pistol shot that kills the wrong person, and begins with exposition by a series of monologues. Nor did Augier use grosser coincidences than that by which Paul de Bréville, wounded in a quixotic duel for an unknown lady, is carried into that very lady's house to await his recovery. "But there is truth in our play," Edmond plead years later, "far more truth than people believe." He was not wholly wrong. The fable is ill-managed, the technique cumbersome. But Henriette is a delicate and charming figure whose nature has been well grasped and is well presented. And throughout the play one has a sense of brave effort to escape from the external and mechanical into a finer region of dramatic art.

A far robuster figure entered the fray for a naturalistic drama in the person of Émile Zola

(1840–1903). Between 1873 and 1878 he produced three plays. But they were hissed from the stage, and his longest run was one of seventeen nights. Yet theoretically and despite the stupefying narrowness of his positivism, Zola had the root of the matter in him. It must have been a strange reflection for him that his ideals for the theatre were ultimately realised in Germany and not in France at all. He began quite rightly by inveighing against the reigning "comedy of intrigue" which he declared to be "a mere game of patience, a bauble . . . in which all solid elements are considered boredom," and equally against the play with a purpose (*pièce à thèse*). "Never," he finely and truly wrote, "have the great masters preached or desired to prove anything. They have lived and that has sufficed to make immortal lessons of their works." His positive statements are even more important for the development of the modern drama. "What is needed to-day is a large and simple delineation of men and things, a drama which Molière might have written." And of his own plays he said: "The action resides not in some plot but in the inner conflicts of the characters; the logic used is not one of facts but of sensations and sentiments." His people, he finally declared, "do not

play but live before the public." This was a remarkably early statement (1878) of the methods of the best modern dramaturgy.

Of the three actual plays of Zola, two may be dismissed at once. *Les Heritiers Rabourdin* (1874) is a tiresome variation on a stock comedy theme; *Le Bouton de Rose* (1878), an unconvincing working over of a phantastic story from Balzac's *Contes Drôlatiques*. There remains *Thérèse Raquin* (1873) which may fairly be called the first tragedy of the naturalistic theatre.

The story is of a crudely brutal tinge. Thérèse and Laurent on a boating expedition drown the former's husband. But they have not, in the end, the strength and the baseness to profit by their crime. On the very night of their marriage, goaded and maddened by remorse and superstitious fear, they take prussic acid and die. There is, however, no coil of intrigue. The play consists in the working out through character of the necessary consequences of a given action. And that action in itself is not fortuitous but had resulted, in its turn, from the contact of character with character. In a word, Zola succeeded measurably in using a logic "not of facts but of sensations and sentiments." The play contains in addition that close-packed portrayal of milieu and

character which is characteristic of the best dramatic work of its kind. As in his novels, to be sure, Zola could not wholly escape the lurid. The paralysis of Mme. Raquin, Sr., her late discovery of her daughter-in-law's guilt, the dreadful revenge of the silenced woman—these are the fruits of Zola's romantic appetite for the monstrous and merely horrible. Yet *Thérèse Raquin*, with its stringent evolution, its unity of place and its strong verisimilitude bears witness to the power and intelligence, if not to the fineness and genius of its author's mind.

The lure of the theatre was also felt by Alphonse Daudet (1840–1897) whose best-known play, *L'Arlésienne*, was produced in 1872. But even as a novelist, and despite the immense documentation of which he was so proud,[1] Daudet hardly belonged to the inner circle of naturalism. The austere impersonality of the school was never truly his. The scene of *L'Arlésienne* is laid in his beloved South; it suffers from an overdose of his characteristic sweetness, and cannot be said to have hastened or even foreshadowed the approach of the modern drama. An interesting technical point in the play is that the woman of Arles, whose

[1] *Vide* his *Trente ans de Paris.*

character is the exciting force of the action, never appears at all.

The youngest of the great naturalistic masters in prose fiction also tried his fortune in the theatre. But the two plays of Guy de Maupassant (1850–1893) appeared in the full tide of the modern movement. He is not at his best in them. Yet both *Musotte* (1891) and *La Paix du Ménage* (1893) show traces of his incomparable power.

Thus it is seen that the naturalistic novelists failed to conquer the stage for the methods of their school. Their work, however, had its influence; later playwrights returned to it for guidance; it gradually accustomed at least a small section of the public to the ideals of the new art, and prepared the way for Henri Becque and for the men and works of the modern French theatre.

IV

I have already named the dramatist who definitely founded the modern theatre in France. The talent of Henri Becque (1837–1891) was slow to mature and even in its maturity hard, dry, and far from copious. His work is not engaging. His mind had neither a touch of ingenuity (the strong point of the older play-

wrights), nor of that almost silent poetry wrung from life itself which distinguishes the later naturalists. His chief gift is that of a Molièrian irony—the irony that results from the unconscious self-revelation of base or corrupt characters. "You have been surrounded by rascals, my dear, ever since your father's death," Teissier, the most brutal of these rascals, says to Marie at the end of *Les Corbeaux* (1882). "You wouldn't want a mistress who is not religious! That would be dreadful!" Clotilde (*La Parisienne*, 1885) exclaims to her lover. The ironic revelation of a confusion of all moral values could scarcely be more succinct and telling. Yet Becque makes no display of these passages; he does not emphasise them or set them off by the modelling of his dialogue. Their power and meaning are gradually revealed.

His first play *L'Enfant prodigue* (1868) is a lively comedy of no great interest or originality. But very doggedly during these years Becque was feeling his way, quite careless of the contemporary fashions of the stage. He had not yet found that way in *Michel Pauper* (1870). The plot is violent and crude; the dialogue stilted and sentimental; and Paris laughed the play to scorn. The first period of his activity may be said to

close with a one-act play *La Navette* (1878). Here, however, amid a conventional plot conveyed through a conventional technique there are hints of the ironic manner of his best passages.

In 1880 Becque produced a robust and keen-witted little comedy in one act: *Les Honnêtes Femmes*. He had evidently now settled down to the close and sober study of character. Through Mme. Chevalier he seeks to reveal woman's genuine attitude to motherhood and marriage. There are almost Shavian hints in her self-revelation. But these are quite unconscious on Becque's part. He had gained the impersonality of the naturalistic drama and, again, two years later, gave the public his masterpiece, *Les Corbeaux*.

The play is a study in character and in social conditions. It is wholly free from polemic intention of any kind. A piece of human life unfolds itself. The technique has not yet the plain and bare nobility attained by Hauptmann or Hirschfeld or Galsworthy at their best. But there is neither trickery nor mechanical interference. The illusion of the rhythm of life is maintained throughout. The second act trails off into a natural, desperate, human silence as one dunning letter after another is read.

We are introduced to the family of a moderately wealthy *bourgeois*. M. Vigneron has a wife and three daughters, Judith, Marie and Blanche. The latter is betrothed to a young man of small means but of good family. Vigneron is entirely self-made. He has suffered privations in his youth and his plenteous table is now his chief pleasure. He overeats and overworks. The first act ends with his death from an apoplectic stroke.

There follow the consequences. The women are quite unskilled and ignorant of affairs. Hence the vultures gather—chief of them Teissier, the late Vigneron's partner, but also architects, furnishers, tradesmen of all sorts and the family solicitor. One kind of pressure after another is applied. Teissier and the solicitor talk of saving what little is left of the estate. Blanche's engagement is broken. Marie, the most clear-seeing of the three girls, is not unaware of the chicanery that surrounds them. But their necessities are immediate. The women are timid, doubtful of their own suspicions, and finally agree to the solicitor's plans. Judith, who is a musician, entertains the hope that she may be able to assume the burden of the family. But her talent is not sufficient for anything except to introduce

her to a life of shame. What is left? Marie consents, quite bravely and humanly, to marry the sordid old Teissier who immediately proceeds to deal with the other vultures.

The dialogue is not polished nor is it particularly racy. The structure is, at times, almost crude. Yet the simple facts of life and their meaning are stamped upon the memory by Becque's dramatic irony. The play, with all its imperfections, is a masterpiece, foreshadowing the long line of works that forms the chief distinction of the modern drama.

La Parisienne is more closely-knit structurally and far better written than *Les Corbeaux*. The unity of place is maintained and the movement is both swift and nimble. Here the dramatist's whole art is concentrated upon the ironic self-revelation of a single character. Clotilde is the woman who is respectably adulterous, sentimentally vicious. She amuses herself with her lovers and is concerned to better her husband's position. She is utterly unaware of her own corruption and makes speech after speech that is memorable for its incisive moral irony.

About the whole career of Becque there is something poverty-stricken and frustrated. Admirable as are his best plays, they seem wrung

from a soul without passion or spiritual fervour. But their importance in the history of the drama is quite secure.

V

By 1885 the "well-made" play of the French type was definitely discredited by all the acutest and freshest critical minds in Europe. In Germany and France the eager young leaders of the modern drama were gradually finding their way toward productivity. But the official and commercial theatres were closed to them. The great public knew little or nothing of the modern movement except as, faintly and distortedly enough, it was aware of the scandal and terror that had followed in the wake of *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts*. Nor was this all. The art of acting, developed for many years in harmony with external effectiveness and artificial eloquence, was in no condition to interpret the simple realities of the new drama. Censorships and police regulations, moreover, made any public performance of modern plays difficult and dangerous.

In this state of affairs M. André Antoine, a Parisian actor and manager, completely in sympathy with the naturalistic drama, established the epoch-making *Théâtre Libre* in 1887. It was

not, in the ordinary sense, a theatre at all. Private performances were given for subscribers only, and thus the problems of both censorship and of commercial profit were eliminated at once. Antoine himself acted and trained his associates in the quiet reproduction of the tones and gestures of life. The names of many of the playwrights whom Antoine introduced to the world have already fallen into a semi-obscurity—Jean Jullien, George Ancey, Camille Fabre. But he opened the careers of Brieux and Curel; he gave Paris *Ghosts*, Tolstoi's *The Might of Darkness* and, in later years, *The Weavers* of Gerhart Hauptmann. Furthermore, in the very year of its organisation, the company of M. Antoine played in Berlin and vitally helped the birth of the new drama in Germany.

Two years later, in 1889, the Free Stage Society (*Verein Freie Bühne*) was established in Berlin. The brilliant journalist, Maximilian Harden, the critics, Theodor Wolff and Paul Schlenther, the skilful stage-manager and defender of naturalism, Otto Brahm, all had their share in the founding of the society which shaped so remarkably the fortunes of the modern drama. The plan of the *Freie Bühne* was in all respects identical with that of Antoine. And like the

Théâtre Libre, it began with Ibsen, with Tolstoi, with Zola and Goncourt, and had the memorable fortune of opening the theatre to Hauptmann.

Both stages had many successors and imitators. The modern drama was thus first presented to small and picked audiences from whom it gradually passed to a larger public. As Brahm admirably put it: "The success of the free stage societies meant their extinction." Both in France and in Germany the masters of the modern drama, one after another, conquered the official and commercial theatres. In England, where the *Independent Theatre* was opened with Ibsen and with Shaw in 1891, the function of a free stage cannot yet, in Brahm's sense, be said to have been completely exercised. In America its use is still to come. The place of these theatres in the history of the modern stage, however, plainly disposes of the critical delusion, so frequently nursed in England and America, that a dramatic movement lacks greatness and force because it does not at once appeal to the populace. The origins of the modern drama on the Continent illustrate the fortunes of an art that, through the mediation of liberal and intelligent audiences, was gradually communicated to the slow moving masses of men.

CHAPTER TWO

THE REALISTIC DRAMA IN FRANCE

I

A MODERATELY acute observer, frequenting the theatres of Paris in the years that followed the founding of the *Théâtre Libre*, would have experienced little difficulty in foretelling the exact character of the whole modern movement on the French stage. The attitude of such an observer to the plays he saw would have varied, of course, with his age and tastes and nationality. Concerning two facts, however, he could not long have remained in doubt: The structural character of the French drama had undergone a profound change; the old patterns had been definitely remoulded. But the change was not, upon the whole, in the direction of that transference of naturalistic aims and methods to the art of the theatre for which Henri Becque had so long and so valiantly laboured.

It is necessary to assume for my observer, no

doubt, a taste for new talents and first nights. Given that taste he would have seen in 1890 Brieux's *Ménages d'Artistes* at the *Théâtre Libre* and Jules Lemaître's *Le Député Leveau* at the *Vaudeville;* in 1891 he would have returned from the *Odéon* knowing that he had witnessed a masterpiece of a new kind in *Amoureuse* by Georges de Porto-Riche. But 1892 would have been his great year. For in that year he would have seen Brieux, still at the *Théâtre Libre*, display his most solid and enduring gifts in the first two acts of *Blanchette;* he would have seen arise on the boards of that same playhouse the sombre and mysterious glow of François de Curel's genius. Nor is this all. At the *Vaudeville*, within the space of a few months, he might have been present at Henri Lavedan's first decisive success with *Le Prince d'Aurec*, and at Paul Hervieu's first display of moral and intellectual gymnastics in *Les Paroles restent.*

Now if my hypothetical play-goer had been, as is not unlikely, over forty, fond of the brilliant artifice traditional on the French stage, and a more or less devout reader of the critiques of Francisque Sarcey, the new methods and experiments he saw would have touched him with a

sense of pain and disillusion. The drama was, quite obviously, ceasing to be an art governed only by its own conventions, and absorbing only so much of the living reality as could be transmuted into theatrical effectiveness. Intrigue, in the older sense, had been very nearly eliminated from the new plays; there was no action merely for its own sake. If the fable was based upon some decisive action, that action had usually taken place long before the unfolding of its moral and spiritual consequences upon the stage. More often, however, the play arose from a character or a condition, rather than from any action. Equally disconcerting must have been the fact that some of these plays showed no progression, but left their characters very much where they found them. In other words, my observer would have discovered, to his delight or dismay, all the earmarks of the modern drama in the early work of the men who were to dominate the French stage of the succeeding quarter of a century.

The technique of the new drama was, necessarily, not only simplified but far more flexible. The relentless pattern of Scribe and his successors was broken: Exposition, progression, resolution, illustrative or antithetical action—both within the

act and within the frame of the whole play, all might be lacking.[1] The plays, by all the traditional rules of the game, should have been ineffectual upon the stage. Yet they were not. Dialogue alone, though rarely epigrammatic or neatly dovetailed, had undergone no fundamental change. The dialogue of the French drama is still literary in the narrower sense. The Parisian play-goer of the early nineties, unlike his German contemporary, was not shocked by hearing the unmistakable accents of his own daily speech and voice float to him across the footlights. Nor, reduced to the printed page, did these new plays show that elaborate exactitude in the description of scene, character, gesture and mood which the great Scandinavian dramatists had introduced and the German naturalists had just perfected.

In other words, the modern drama in France, subtle, flexible and trenchant in theme and technique as it is, has not been, as I began by pointing out, steadily naturalistic at any time. Brieux alone achieves, rarely in more than a single act, passages of broad and robust objectivity. But always his over-eager intellect breaks in; and either shatters or slowly analyses away the world

[1] For a discriminating but by no means hostile description of the traditional technique *cf.* Augustin Filon: *De Dumas à Rostand,* pp. 14–17.

he has created. Now naturalism is the product of a brooding and contemplative mind. It is watchful of the vision of life, but very patient; not over-zealous to change this essentially changeless world, nor desirous of reducing its vast multiformities to the trim confines of a moral or an inference. The modern drama of France, on the contrary, is restlessly intelligent and even argumentative. It is, like the whole of French literature, vividly social, immensely preoccupied with moral ideas and careless of facts except as they illustrate the ideas which the playwright has at heart. Thus it comes about that the most illustrious master of the contemporary stage in France, Paul Hervieu, as well as his lesser colleague, Eugène Brieux, is a preacher of doctrine rather than a creator of character.

The activity of the French drama during the past twenty years has been quite literally enormous. Hence I must exclude from my interpretative survey those figures which do not add to an understanding of the character—so diverse and yet so homogeneous—of the modern drama. I omit, therefore, with little hesitation, the solidly observed work of Georges Courtelines, the amiable comedies of Alfred Capus, the high-pitched emotional plays of Henri Bernstein. Nor, on the

other hand, is it advisable to touch upon the increasing throng of talents that yet lack outline and perspective. We shall learn all that is necessary from the work of seven playwrights which by its scope, significance and level of accomplishment holds and illustrates the national stage. These playwrights are Georges de Porto-Riche, François de Curel, Henri Lavedan, Eugène Brieux, Paul Hervieu, Jules Lemaître and Maurice Donnay.

II

M. Georges de Porto-Riche (b. 1849) has called his collected plays *Théâtre d'Amour*. The title is just. For M. de Porto-Riche is quite exclusively the psychologist of love. Alone of the modern French dramatists he began his career by writing and publishing verses. Yet it would be vain to look in his plays for lyric ardour or romantic passion. Beauty he sees in love, but a beauty that is touched with mournfulness. His insight into the maladies of love, into the difficulties of the human heart, is so complete, that it has silenced in him all protest or precept. He analyses with a quiet but unerring kindliness that nervous, passionate, sad battle which the modern mind calls love—love, now no longer the

blending of a sacred weakness into a larger and sustaining life, but the bitter strife between man and woman, fatally hostile to each other in their new separateness and incapable of any harmonious union of some other, yet undiscovered kind. Of these conflicts the characters of Porto-Riche have no objective consciousness. They experience them; they do not reflect upon them or analyse them. They know that to endure love at all takes whatever one has of delicacy, of self-abnegation, of the power to suffer. Yet they know, too, that love is the eternally beautiful and desirable. Hence they speak with voices slightly subdued, and their creator has lent them a subtle and well-cadenced eloquence, passionate yet temperate, elegant yet sincere.

Porto-Riche made his first appearance as a playwright toward the end of 1888 at the *Théâtre Libre* with a one-act comedy, *La Chance de Françoise*. The piece is structurally imperfect. The awkward convention of the impossible "aside" is used and the characters are pulled about mechanically. But already the author understands the root of the matter. Françoise is the modern middle-class woman, freed from nearly all physical burdens and material tasks, and making of love her calling and her occupation. Thence arise the

enormous emotional demands which she makes upon her husband. The latter, however, is an artist and philanderer, and for this reason Porto-Riche's first statement of his favourite "case" lacks justness and representative power. Uncommon, too, are the perfect humility and sweetness of Françoise which make her condemn even her silent suffering as in the nature of a reproach. For such a temperament there is no hope except —as the author clearly saw—in the sadly joyous cry of Françoise to her husband with which the play ends: "She has betrayed you, Lovelace; you are growing old!"

The fine analytic and dramatic power so clearly present in *La Chance de Françoise* came to admirable maturity three years later in the three-act play, *Amoureuse*. It is by virtue primarily of this play that Porto-Riche's name belongs definitely to the history of the French theatre. It has never, from its first appearance to the present year, been long absent from the Parisian stage. For years it formed a solid addition to the repertory of Mme. Réjane, and in 1908 it enjoyed a new triumph at the *Comédie-Française*.

Amoureuse is an extraordinarily complete and searching presentation of the problem of modern love. Dr. Étienne Fériaud is a distinguished

physician and investigator with a noble and virile faith in his mission and in his type. "It is they whom you jeer at," he says to his frivolous friend Pascal, "it is the scientists, the artists and the poets who have bettered this imperfect world and made it more endurable. . . . Doubtless they have been bad husbands, indifferent friends, rebellious sons. Does it matter? Their labours and their dreams have sown happiness, justice and beauty over the earth. They have not been kind lovers, these egoists, but they have created love for those who came after them." Dr. Fériaud, always admired by women, has had his adventures, though the chief of these was eminently staid and sensible. At forty he has married, for love, to be sure, but quite definitely in order to pursue, in the suave peace of his own home, his intellectual aims. In making these reasonable plans he has reckoned without the psychology of the modern woman. Mme. Germaine Fériaud, as she tells him in a brilliant passage, has not been surfeited with passion and romance before marriage. In marriage she must find her passion and her romance. Unendurable as her exactions are, she esteems them nobler and braver than the sensible comforts of middle-aged matrimony. The result is that Fériaud can neither work nor think.

"I have lost the right to be alone," he cries out, "she rummages in my brain as though it were a chest of drawers." He writes his letters in a restaurant to avoid Germaine's nerve-racking inquisitiveness. Her feminine adornments are on his desk, his house is in disorder, dispute follows reconciliation, and reconciliation, dispute. He has accepted an invitation to represent the medical science of France at a congress in Florence. By her troubling and indirect appeals, by her half-hidden cajoleries, Germaine causes him—apparently by his own will—to withdraw at the eleventh hour and stay with her. No sooner has he made his consent to stay irrevocable than the subtle rancour that is necessarily at the heart of such a situation breaks forth. He tells Germaine the brutal truth at last: He is suffocating spiritually and physically because she has the fatal power of putting him in a state of mind which is contrary to the good advice she gives him but in harmony with those intimate desires of her own which she dare not formulate. He must have freedom and, since she threatens him with an act of irreparable rebellion and vengeance, he offers her with cold sarcasm to Pascal. Infuriated by his cool analysis of their emotional situation, she takes him at his word. But Germaine has her own notions of

honour. She confesses her sin and turns to leave the house. At the door Étienne stops her. Love is deeper than wasted days, stronger than sin. "Why have restlessness and jealousy forced me to re-open this door?" he laments. "Alas, we have torn at each other like bitter foes, irreparable words have been spoken; I have misunderstood you, you have betrayed me and yet—I am here. It seems as though we were riveted together by all the evil we have done each other, by all the shameful words we have spoken." "But we will not be happy," she cries. And all his answer is: "What does it matter?"

I do not think that M. de Porto-Riche has equalled *Amoureuse* either in *Le Passé* (1897), despite the engaging and austere charm of Dominique Brienne, nor in the tragic, though painful, *Le vieil homme*. But this play served, in 1911, to recall to the entire Parisian press the fact that France possesses one dramatist who unites with magnificent economy of workmanship—fewness of characters, unity of place and almost of time—a marvellous knowledge of human passion which he has never consented to dilute by rapid production or to subordinate to a merely theatrical effectiveness.

M. François de Curel (b. 1854) has been called a psychologist. I am willing to grant him that title, although his psychology has a way of being, at crucial points, altogether incredible. In truth, he has a thousand shortcomings as a dramatist and yet this remarkable virtue, that, in a country of social talents and clear accomplishments, he is so rigorously, so mysteriously himself. It is difficult to imagine where he gained his intense and sombre vision of life. One fancies him, like his own Robert de Chantenelles, the son of an ancient family fallen upon evil days, passing his boyhood and youth in the vast greenery of some forgotten and solitary park. Beyond the park are great stretches of barren country. Within it, here and there, are pools, deep and old and green. A few white swans float on these stagnant waters and fragments of old statuary crumble amid the shadows. Here the youth, dreaming and thinking, built himself that vision of human life and character which no contact with the world has been able to obliterate or change. Here he must have conceived those wide-eyed, wandering souls with their strange nobility and strange passions who people his plays. But in whatever way one seeks to disengage the peculiar qualities of Curel's genius, the spirit of the man will scarcely admit

a very intimate approach. It remains in its ardent, troubled obscurity.

He mastered at the very outset of his career the methods of modern dramaturgy which fell in with his native bent. His fables are of souls at conflict with themselves or with each other; of visible action there is little. Hence a few characters and a limited scene suffice him. The drama of complicated intrigue and rattling curtains would have silenced him effectually. Of dialogue he is a master and writes it, especially in his earlier pieces, with a haunting vibrancy of modulation which carries one through speeches that are not seldom inordinately long.

M. de Curel's plays are few. And yet within their narrow range he seems to have exhausted the number of situations with which he can deal powerfully. His latest play *Le Coup d'Aile* (1906) is a tissue of sheer psychological violence, though even here one must admit that wild energy—like Charlotte Brontë's—which, for moments at least, silences protest and disbelief. But indeed all his fables are difficult and strange: A woman is abandoned by her betrothed. She tries to kill the young wife who has been preferred to her and retires to a convent. Eighteen years pass. The man dies and she returns to the world.

She discovers that the wife has not kept, according to the promise that was made, the shameful secret. Thus the false saint renounced life in vain. She seeks now to rob her rival of an only daughter, but a message of memory and affection from the dead man—only now transmitted—softens the harsh waywardness of her soul and she returns to the cloister (*L'Envers d'une Sainte*, 1892). Another woman, discovering her husband's vulgar *liaison* leaves her home and her children in an access of proud fury and permits herself to be thought bad or mad for sixteen years. Then she returns having—if one will believe it—stifled so long the agony of her motherhood, and rescues her daughters from the corrupting influences of her husband's life (*L'Invitée*, 1893). And still another woman, brave, young, intelligent, permits herself, loving him in silence, to be married as a matter of mere form, for social and business reasons, to an eminent politician who—as it is denominated in the bond—is to keep his mistress. The young wife conquers through her wisdom and her beauty and turns her shadow into a substance (*La Figurante*, 1896). It is needless to dwell on the incredibly self-torturing souls in *L'Amour brode* (1893), or on that savage girl who, disillusioned with the Western civilisa-

tion grafted upon her unconquerable primitiveness, becomes a queen in some far island of the Southern seas (*La Fille sauvage*, 1902). Illogical and monstrous as these fables are, Curel's intensity and almost tragic conviction wrests from us an unwilling and temporary assent.

His masterpiece is his second play: *Les Fossiles* (1892). In a great, shadowy chateau live the Duke de Chantenelles, his wife and his children, Robert and Claire. Cut off by their lineage and traditions from the life of the Republic, they pass a morbid and silent existence. The duke hunts furiously to deaden his disappointment and his grief. For Robert is dying of consumption, and with him the house of Chantenelles is doomed. To console him in his last days Robert asks for the presence of Hélène Vautrin, a poor schoolfellow of Claire's who once passed many months as a guest of the Chantenelles. Robert confesses that she was his mistress and has borne him a child. The dying man's wish is granted, despite Claire's desperate opposition, and, since the child is a boy, a marriage is determined upon which will save the ancient house from destruction. But Claire's struggle grows more embittered. She has sent Hélène out into the world on account of the girl's shameful relations to the

duke. The latter, however, silences his daughter by an appeal to the supreme law of their lives. She consents to the outrage for the sake of the continuance of her race. Hélène comes. She had yielded to the duke, it appears, through ignorance and confusion. But on his return home her real love was given to Robert. Now Robert is ordered South and his young wife pleads with him that, after his death, she be permitted to go with her child and live her own life. Claire hears her and, in terror lest all their monstrous consents and abnegations have been in vain, cries out to Robert the dreadful truth. The duke confirms it with the cry: "The child is—ours!" Deliberately Robert returns to the frost-bound chateau of the North to die swiftly. Beside his bier Claire reads his last directions: Hélène may take the boy elsewhere and train him to a life of true nobility—a nobility not less austere because it will not disdain to share the life of its age and country. And Claire must watch over these two, in utter forgetfulness of self, in order that these wrongs may be, in some wise, expiated. Are these not almost Thyestian horrors? But the play burns with the white heat of that unflinching dedication to an ideal of secular greatness and endurance. To be sure, we do not believe in

Hélène who speaks the unspeakable truth in virginal accents. But that is Curel, whose sense of measure and probability are lost in his passionate absorption.

His work is unequal, violent and tortured at its best. But it is not easily forgotten, not lightly put aside. The man seems a changeling in his country of firm, sane and accomplished masters, of brilliant, well-tempered, intellectual achievement. His public recognition must always be partial and hesitant, and I am glad to pay this tribute to the genius—however turbid and however often touched with futility—of François de Curel.

III

The drama, in its stricter meaning, attracted only gradually the brilliant and varied energies of M. Henri Lavedan (b. 1859). He began with novels and then proceeded to write down, in numberless dialogues, which never attain the structural fulness and complexity of even one-act plays, the moral history of his age. These dialogues embody characteristic moments in the life of modern society—moments held fast by an astonishingly acute and detailed power of observation and rendered in the easiest and most living speech to

be found in French. They are prose idylls of the decadence of the neo-Latins; they embrace every social class and every shade of contemporary psychology. Grouped in series of twenty or thirty under significant headings, they illustrate the fact that M. Lavedan's observation has been very seriously directed. He is not unaware of the possibility that *Les Jeunes*, *Le Lit*, *Les Marionettes*, *Leur Beau Physique*, *Leur Coeur*, *Leur Soeurs*, *Les Petites Visites*, may teach the future more concerning the life and manners of the expiring nineteenth century than many noisier and more pretentious works. These studies in dialogue do not, unhappily, belong to my subject and I must pass on to the eleven plays which M. Lavedan has given to the French stage, between 1890 and 1911.

For reasons sufficiently dark to a foreigner his first play *Une Famille* (1890) was crowned by the Academy and played at the *Comédie-Française*. Virtue, to be sure, triumphs in the play, but the intrigue creaks obviously around a mechanical device to a hollow ending. One can very well understand, on the other hand, the resounding success of *Le Prince d'Aurec* (1892) and its sequel, *Les deux Noblesses* (1894), without granting either play a very high degree of dra-

matic or literary value. In these two pieces M. Lavedan undertook to discuss the present status and moral outlook of the nobility of France. The young Prince d'Aurec, of illustrious descent and noble traditions, is a typical *blageur* of his particular decade. He jeers at all the ideals which, by his birth and station, he should normally uphold. A furious gambler, and on the point of complete ruin, he is quite willing to sell the ancestral sword of the Connetable d'Aurec, and puts himself—as does his wife on her own account—hopelessly into the power of a Jewish banker. At the last moment the situation is saved and the Prince is recalled to a brief consciousness of his duties by his mother. The old duchess, however —and here one at once surprises M. Lavedan's moral—is not by birth an aristocrat at all. She was the daughter of a wealthy merchant, married for her money by the older d'Aurec even as Mlle. Poirier in Augier's play of nearly fifty years before. It is the born *bourgeoise*, in a word, who sustains the great traditions of the house of Aurec. And in *Les deux Noblesses* it is by a d'Aurec who, under the plebeian name of Roche has become a modern captain of industry, that the fortunes of the house are retrieved. Of the house? Scarcely. For Suzanne de Touringe, on

marrying the oil king's son, determines to be simply Mme. Roche. Thus the nobility of labour and the nobility of birth are not really blended into a new future for the aristocracy. The former absorbs the latter and M. Lavedan's real issue is still to seek. Technically both plays are lumbering; the second has a violently melodramatic plot; the dialogue is, in many places, declamatory and conventional.

No, it is not in these pieces that I am able to recognise Lavedan's permanent contribution to the French drama, nor in the wordy and flamboyant plays of a later period (*Le Marquis de Priola*, 1902; *Le Duel*, 1905). I recognise that contribution in the three, I am sorry to say, scandalous comedies; *Viveurs* (1895), *Le nouveau Jeu* (1898), *Le vieux Marcheur* (1894), and in the mellower tone and real charm of his most recent play, *Le Goût du Vice* (1911).

This play throws light not only on the characters who appear in it but upon the temperament and career of M. Lavedan himself. The taste for vice, in its literal sense, is as old as mankind. But here is a group of people who cultivate it because it is the fashion of the hour, because they are ashamed of goodness and force themselves to alien immodesties. How does the taste for vice

express itself? In a morbid horror of the imputation of priggishness, "in skirting precipices, in brushing the wings of vice, in talking about impossible things and asserting what one would never dare commit." It is from such motives that M. Lavedan's Lortay writes semi-obscene fiction, and that the altogether delightful Mirette of the play apes a corruption of which she is incapable, talks Casanova, and reads *Paul et Virginie*. When they have found each other, his occupation is, quite naturally, gone. "What shall I write now?" he asks in dismay. "The Distaste for Vice!" Mirette flashes out.

The whole is an experience which, with an acuter consciousness, of course, M. Lavedan has himself known. *Viveurs*, *Le nouveau Jeu* and *Le vieux Marcheur* owe their stronger and more vivid qualities to a taste for vice. For, despite an occasional undertone of irony, M. Lavedan is very calmly tolerant of these creatures whom he has so magnificently observed and so tellingly bodied forth. These plays of the people who have "desires, thirsts, hungers and no souls" are very honestly and solidly built, robustly real and sober. They alone, among Lavedan's plays, are without shabby concessions to the mere stage. The dialogue in them, too, is subtle, flexible, unafraid of

reality. The world they portray is a thick world; it is concrete and tangible and, in no way, a theatrical schematisation of the real.

The *Viveurs* form the hot-eyed rout of the boulevards, reeling from one joyless pleasure to another in a restless fever of attempted forgetfulness; spurring the weary flesh by new vices—satiated and yet tireless. We see these women at their tailor, the men and women at a night *café* and in the waiting room of a fashionable physician who shares their vices and their disillusion. From this crowd there gradually emerges one almost tragic figure. Mme. Blandin, stung to the soul at last, implores her husband for a different life. She is refused and hurls herself back, utterly desperate, into the murky stream. *Le nouveau Jeu* is an abysmal pantomime of arid souls. Yet it never abandons the mood and gait of comedy. It portrays the striving after what, in the more vulgar English phrase, is "up-to-date." The incidents of the play will not bear telling. But the characters stand forth tangibly in all their spiritual poverty, and the note of irony assumes a larger significance at the play's end. The courtesan explains to the judge of instruction the lust for mere opposition and empty paradox that animates this world. And the judge bows before

her with these words: "You have instructed me."

Le vieux Marcheur—the title tells the story—ranks in vividness and solidity somewhat below its two predecessors.

Such are the products of M. Lavedan's taste for vice. Like his own Lortay and Mirette he has known the reaction and in the second mood has written *Catherine* (1896) and *Sire* (1909). But a reaction from the contemplation of vice is apt, in its merely negative character, to fall upon an unreal and impossible spotlessness. The people in *Catherine* are of a hollow perfection. Tap them and they will break like Christmas figurines —angels and Santa Clauses—of sugar and flour. Their sentiments are too correct; their wings too unruffled. At one point in the third act a truly human difficulty threatens to creep in. The Duc de Coutras, having married his sister's music teacher, feels the irk of his wife's well-intentioned but unmannerly family whom wealth and ease are beginning to corrupt. He criticises even her, the blameless Catherine (a modern and French Clarissa) in the remark that the heart, too, has its nerves. But the excessive sweetness of the first two acts settles down upon the last, and the issues of the situation are all shirked. *Sire* is the study of a beautiful, unreal sentiment. A faint

whiff of lavender exhales from it. But the piece is over-elaborate for so frail a theme and, again, over-sweet. No, I prefer the Lavedan of the boulevards. He knows these amusement-seekers and ultra-moderns and old rakes. In their society he is unconstrained, copious and exact. It is from their lives that he has wrung his best work. A powerful, but not a notably fine nature, M. Lavedan is at his best when he observes and records. This he has done in his dialogues and in his three comedies. When he ceases to be objective he becomes violent and sentimental by turns. Only in *Le Goût du Vice* has he added style and the fine play of intelligence to his work. Having found the *genre* of his last comedy, he should either cultivate it or return to the impassive chronicles of his earlier years.

IV

Mr. Bernard Shaw has recently told us, with characteristic vehemence and assurance, that M. Eugène Brieux (b. 1858) is the greatest French dramatist since the seventeenth century and the worthy successor of Molière. In the same lively essay Mr. Shaw informs us that the French Alexandrine is surpassed in worthlessness as a literary medium only by English blank-verse. So it is

clear that Mr. Shaw claims the occasional privilege (a thing not unknown among men of genius) of talking quite at random. There are saner if quieter ways, surely, of honouring the arresting talent and vigorous productivity of M. Eugène Brieux.

M. Brieux is the self-constituted censor of his age. Unlike the Roman poet, he does not scourge the manners of his contemporaries with laughter, however bitter, but with denunciation and harangue. In order to exercise his office in the theatre he has invented the formula of the didactic play. In act one the evil is exhibited through character and circumstance; in act two its consequences are set forth; in act three it is talked about. The three plays so widely read in America are but isolated specimens of the vast reformatory zeal of M. Brieux. In the course of the years he has denounced many abuses and instructed the public on many subjects; the pursuit of mere art, popular education, parents-in-law, universal suffrage, heredity, charity, divorce, horse-racing, marriage, the administration of justice, wet-nurses, venereal disease, eugenics, illicit love, the French character, religion. Is not this a prodigious list? I have not invented it, however; it represents, literally and in chronological

order the subject-matter and polemic purpose of M. Brieux's plays from 1892 to 1907—from *Ménages d'Artistes*, presented humbly and after long struggles at the *Théâtre Libre* to *La Foi* which saw the boards in London and Paris with all the pomp and circumstance of its author's international fame.

I am not aware that the question has been asked: What, then, is M. Brieux's equipment for his task? On what is based the magnificent assurance of his criticism of society? I find a partial answer, at least, to these questions in *La Foi*. For in this play M. Brieux discusses the supreme concern of man—the meaning of his existence and his relation to the universe.

With marvellous theatrical virtuosity Brieux has for once transferred his scene into the past. We are carried to ancient Egypt where the mysterious Nile, on the authority of Pharaohs and priests, demands its annual tribute of human sacrifice. Now there arises a man called Satni who has discovered that there are no gods. He calls to him the poor and disinherited of the land and tells them that by the mummery of fabled gods, kings and priests have oppressed them. He bids them be free henceforth of both hope and fear. The women mourn the loss of that heavenly kind-

ness in which they had believed; Satni's father dies cursing him because he has emptied the universe of hope; Satni himself, in a moment of compassion for the poor, lends himself to the high-priest's trickery of false miracles. But he perceives the deeper bondage that will follow and dies with the declaration of the miracle's falseness upon his lips.

The fabric of the play is dazzling enough. Its purport is only too obvious. M. Brieux is of the opinion that, in the widest sense, there are no gods. He subscribes to the old-fashioned rationalistic nonsense that religion was invented or, at least, fostered by priests and kings to keep the common folk in poverty and subjection. To slay the slain is as futile in the matter of argument as of anything else. But it has never, apparently, occurred to M. Brieux that hunger and stripes are not needed to make us desire a divine rather than a dispeopled universe, and that his Pharaohs and high-priests, in moments of weariness and insight, felt that desire as profoundly as their most abject slaves. The unphilosophical and unhistorical character of Satni and M. Brieux's attitude is as clear to us to-day as is the village free-thinker's of thirty years ago.

It is in the hard and shallow glare of such

fundamental convictions that Brieux has called society to his judgment bar. His is a mind without a past. History, philosophy, literature, have taught him nothing. He relies on science and common-sense and reverses, in all his mental processes, the famous line of Verlaine:

"Pas de couleur, rien que la nuance!"

Now there are problems which science and common-sense are sufficient to deal with. The evils of vicarious motherhood (*Les Remplaçantes*) and of excessive gambling (*Résultat des Courses*) may, no doubt, be gradually legislated out of existence and no very worthy protest will arise. When, however, M. Brieux attacks problems of greater complexity or subtlety, he produces either helpless platitudes or—something worse. At the end of her acute and typical sufferings Blanchette, the girl educated above her station, is asked by her father: "And so people do wrong to give their children an education?" "No," Blanchette replies, "only they must also give them some way of using it and not want to make public officials of them." M. Brieux's conclusions in the matter of charity are equally novel and illuminating: "You must love whom you desire to comfort; you must enclose your alms in

a handshake." Compare with these lame platitudes John Galsworthy's treatment of the same problem in *The Pigeon*. In the answer, finally, which the physician in *Les Avariés* gives Georges Dupont to the question how the latter, some day, is to guide his son—in this answer, carefully pruned and bowdlerised in the American representation of *Damaged Goods*—M. Brieux sounds the depth of brutal and fatuous inadequacy.

But his authority matches itself with even more delicate and difficult problems: The pursuit of art for its own sake is charlatanism and moral shabbiness; the average marriage of convenience is odious but better than spinsterhood or depravity; motherhood should be regulated; love should not be curbed by motives of prudence. To all these rules one may give a superficial assent. But I am always pursued by the suspicion that on every question—as, so clearly, on that of faith—a great deal is to be said of which Brieux is constitutionally unaware, and that the real problem usually begins where his authoritative platitudes end.

Many of the evils which he combats, moreover, are knit into the very texture of human character. Yet he appears to have a robust faith that it needs but his bustling exposures to make

men cease from the evil which they do. Not so. A merely positivistic and hence, despite all pretence, utilitarian ethics has never influenced mankind. An ethics without foundation in metaphysics or religion never will. We need a nobler mandate to secure our obedience. A voice crying on the market-place or from the stage: "There are no gods! There is no divine sanction in the universe! But curb your instincts and destroy abuses!"—such a voice, without persuasiveness or sweetness or power will only alienate wisdom and darken counsel.

I have dwelt at some length on the didacticism of M. Brieux for two reasons: He is in danger, under the guidance of Mr. Shaw, of being taken seriously as a social philosopher; and because the negligible passions of a secularist preacher have irretrievably impaired the noblest original endowment for the art of the theatre that modern France has produced.

M. Brieux began his career as a confirmed naturalist, fitted, beyond any other Frenchman to share and continue the triumphs of that order of art—the visible evocation of moral and material environments and the creation of character. The formula of the didactic play which he has invented and practised requires, in each case, a first

act descriptive of the conditions concerning which, from about the middle of the second act on, M. Brieux desired to discourse. These first acts are in their sober objectivity a series of admirable triumphs. The symbolist charlatans in *Ménages d'Artistes*, the peasants and their world in *Blanchette*, the moral turmoil of cheap politics in *L'Engrénage*, the village folk in *Les Remplaçantes*, the milliners in *La petite Amie*:—these are unsurpassable in reality, convincingness and power. Here are scenes and characters which any dramatist might envy. But as M. Brieux's career has progressed these studies in reality have become fewer and more superficial; the tide of mere words has risen, and at the very height of their dramatic passion his characters have begun to break out into polemic generalisations. Nor were the gifts of the naturalist his only ones. In *Le Berceau* (1898) he treated, five years before M. Hervieu, the precise theme of the latter's *Le Dédale*. Without having recourse to the violent incidents that disfigure M. Hervieu's play, by sheer power of analysing the most delicate conflicts, moral and nervous, he achieves a truth to which there is, for once, no possible answer. Only, Hervieu's play is a play throughout; Brieux talks for an act and a half about that which, as

an artist, he has so brilliantly and completely set forth.

A few times only in his long and busy career a spirit of artistic repose has stolen over M. Brieux's restless mind. In *La Couvée* (1893), *La petite Amie* (1902), and *Les Hannetons* (1906), he has respected the objectivity of the art of the drama and written entire plays. *La Couvée* is a domestic drama, quiet, delicate and moving. The Graindor children have been spoiled by their mother's selfish love; the father's authority has been thwarted by sentimentality and cajolery. Now the boy and girl have grown up. The boy has been ruined by indulgence; the girl is safely married, but Mme. Graindor is jealous of her son-in-law and kindly enough but relentlessly rules the homeless dwelling of the young couple. The husband, with the co-operation of his father-in-law, however, asserts the independence of his household. Auguste Graindor goes to Africa and the parents are left alone. "The brood has grown up; the little ones fly from the nest." The sadness and the power of man's common lot are in the play.

La petite Amie is a tragedy. Two amiable souls, devoted to each other, are quite literally forced out of existence by the rancorous ambi-

tion and impenetrable worldliness of the youth's father. One door of hope after another closes. The evil of fate is inherent in the characters and in the social structure. These characters, especially M. and Mme. Logerais, are permanent additions to one's world of imaginative realities.

I am almost tempted to call *Les Hannetons* Brieux's masterpiece. It is assuredly his most finished play. The situation, that of a man dominated through weakness, habit, nervousness, by a worthless woman, is pitiful and sordid enough. Nor does anything happen. Pierre thinks, for a space, that he has escaped the yoke; then bows his head again in fatalistic submission. The bitter comedy—full of a harsh but abundant comic power—ends where it began. But the thing is done to the life; the inevitable details are etched as with acid upon the brain. It is a "slice of life" presented in the simple and austere fashion of the great Germanic naturalists, tempered by the wit and ease and mobile energy of French art.

The literary character and career of M. Brieux illustrate the chariness of nature. So vast an expenditure of power; such broken and fragmentary results! In a more reposeful and less inquisitive age he would have fashioned, as an ar-

tist should. Or else, gifted with a subtler and more flexible intelligence, he would have seen that art, even were one to grant it the mission of practical influence, must exercise that influence by implication, by creation alone. He was called to be the glory of the French stage; he has sold his birthright for a handful of ephemeral half-truths.

That elegant and reserved artist M. Paul Hervieu (b. 1857) is often mentioned side by side with Brieux. No two dramatists could, in reality, present sharper points of difference. M. Brieux is robust and prodigal; M. Hervieu, delicate and frugal. Their names have been coupled because they are both interested in ideas; but M. Brieux's ideas are limited to the sociological polemics of his time; Hervieu is interested in those moral conceptions which form the manners and dictate the laws of men.

Around such ideas he has fashioned plays that are unparalleled in their spareness and concision. He has eliminated from them all elements that do not immediately further or illustrate his central and controlling thought. With the most conscious deliberation he denies himself many of the richest qualities of the modern playwright's work: moral and material density of milieu; com-

pletely embodied characters; action that eddies in the stream of reality. Milieu, character and action, on the contrary, appear only in so far as they serve to express the dominant idea which the play is to drive home. His people, in the throes of their particular crises, are exhibited as absorbed by these alone, and are suddenly deprived—unnaturally but, granting the method, logically—of all other interests, appetites, passions, hopes.

There can be little doubt but that in M. Hervieu's creative process, the moral idea always precedes both fable and character. It is, in truth, the ideas that build the plays. Hence their structure is logical, almost abstract. Their relation to the vast welter of reality is like that born by geometry to the concrete phenomena of space. M. Hervieu does not even spare us the *quod erat demonstrandum* of Euclid. For each play ends with a final iteration of the moral truth so pregnantly announced in the exact expressiveness of his titles. M. Hervieu's rigorous methods are illustrated in a very curious and interesting way by some of these endings. *Les Paroles restent* (1892) closes as follows:

Mme. de Sabécourt: Ah, words,—they flutter away.
Ligeuil: Not so. Words remain.
The Doctor: And they kill!

Which is precisely the truth that the play was written to prove. Again: The last speech of *La Course du Flambeau* (1901) is the tragic cry of Sabine Revel: "For my daughter's sake I have killed my mother." And that every woman, given a cruel conflict of interests would do so is the play's point. *Connais-toi* (1909) finally, which expresses, in so masterly a way, the disharmony between the emotional gestures forced on us by a romantic civilisation and our real feelings, ends thus:

General Sibéran: Yesterday I would have deemed my friend [who has forgiven his erring wife] abject and grotesque.

Clarisse: And were you a better man yesterday?

General Sibéran: I knew myself less well.

Clarisse: Ah, who knows himself?

M. Hervieu's technique, then, has the severe beauty of the abstract. He sacrifices, I fear, a higher and richer beauty. But it is not the critic's business to quarrel with an artist's chosen methods, only with the artist's disloyalty to them. Such disloyalty is rare in M. Hervieu's work. Only now and then may one detect—as in the romantic accidents in the fourth act of *La Course du Flambeau* or the mechanism on which the action of *Le Réveil* hinges—an unscrupulous eager-

ness to point the moral sharply. Of adornment M. Hervieu is never eager. He is the ascetic servant of moral ideas.

I hasten to dispose of the one adverse criticism which the workmanship of this sane and admirable artist can never wholly escape. His dialogue is often tortured and often extravagant. A rather sober young financier and manufacturer is made to say to the young woman who has just accepted him: "You make me mad for joy; I would like to fall on my knees and cry out my happiness" (*La Course du Flambeau*). "Make me to know," says a man to a woman in *Le Réveil*, "every shadow that may appear under your brow, in order that I may obliterate it gently with my kisses." In *Connais-toi* a suspected wife says to her husband: "You may bump my skull against the wall and you will make no further explanations spurt forth." A close thinker, a notable artist in the structure of his work, M. Hervieu seems to lack the narrower sense for style as a fine adaptation of verbal means to ends. It is but just to add that in his latest play *Bagatelle* (1912) the dialogue shows greater moderation and dignity.

The chief plays of M. Hervieu may be divided into three groups: those in which he seeks to il-

lustrate universal moral truths; those in which he attacks a false moral idea embodied in an unjust law; those in which he dissects the romantic traditions of our emotional life.

To the first group belong *Les Paroles restent*, *La Course du Flambeau*, and *Le Dédale*. *Les Paroles restent* relates the story of a slander innocently set afloat. The lie corrupts and corrodes the social existence and spiritual peace of several lives and, in the end, quite literally slays. *Le Dédale* seeks to translate into an overwhelmingly compelling action—an action which, unhappily, flares into melodrama in the fifth act—the moral impossibility of divorce, if there be a child. But *La Course du Flambeau* is the most notable drama in this group. Sabine Revel, a widow of thirty-six, lives with her mother Mme. Fontanés upon whom she is economically dependent, and her daughter Marie-Jeanne. Early in the first act an old friend of the family announces the theme in speaking to Sabine: "You do not know all your worth as a mother. And you will never know, I trust, the slightness of your worth as a daughter. Such truths are not learned when life is quiet and harmonious, but amid violent trials and bitter cries." Then the illustrative action sets in. Sabine sends away beyond recall

the man she loves because she will not rob Marie of her entire love and care until the latter no longer needs them. Scarcely has Stangy gone than Marie announces her betrothal to Didier Maravon. Sabine has thrown away her future in vain. Four years of happy marriage pass for Marie when Didier finds himself ruined. His honour is unimpaired but he needs three hundred thousand francs to settle with his creditors and regain his financial stability. Sabine appeals to her mother. But the refusal of Mme. Fontanés is unconditional. She will neither impoverish her daughter, nor break the promise given to her dead husband not to alienate his hard-earned capital. Marie, in her despair, actually reproaches Sabine for not having married Stangy, and forces her to write to him to America for help. Delay follows delay. Sabine attempts forgery but is unsuccessful. Marie's health breaks down. She is ordered to the Engadine, but the doctor warns Sabine that Mme. Fontanés, who has a lesion of the heart, must not risk that altitude. Mme. Fontanés, ignorant of her danger and irritated at Sabine's maternal egotism, insists on either keeping Sabine with her or making the journey. Sabine, rather than see her place near her child taken by a nurse, consents to Mme.

Fontanés going. In the Swiss hotel Stangy appears, married alas, but wealthy and full of his old kindness. He offers Didier a position in America which the latter and Marie joyfully accept. Greatly and passionately Sabine pleads with her daughter not to leave her. But Marie follows her husband. The tragic woman turns to her mother: "Mother, I have only you; I have never had any one but you!" And Mme. Fontanés falls dead. The play is almost unbearably poignant. For the idea presented with so much power, if with some exaggeration, is one which cuts at the root of our pretensions and of our self-esteem.

The moral idea which, crystallised in custom and law, M. Hervieu has most bitterly attacked, is that of the final dominance of the man in marriage. In *Les Tenailles* (1895) and *La Loi de l'homme* (1897) he shows two marriages, both irretrievably ruined: one by a lack of sympathy and affection; one by the husband's flagrant infidelity. Yet neither of these marriages could be dissolved according to the then law of France. That law, by giving the power of ultimate decision to the man alone, imprisons Irène Fergan in *Les Tenailles* and condemns Laure de Raguais in *La Loi de l'homme* to an even more shameful

bondage by demanding for her husband's indisputable misdeed a kind of proof impossible to obtain. Both marriages could, of course, have been dissolved had the two men been willing to lend their aid to the necessary steps. At this point, however, enters the characteristically French conception of marriage as primarily a social institution and hardly at all as a union of free personalities. Fergan and Raguais, though calmly convinced that marriage has ceased to mean anything to them personally, refuse to envisage the possibility of divorce. They are unwilling to incur the moral, material and social diminution of their power and status which divorce would entail. One can, at least, they agree, keep one's personal dignity and present an uncrumbled social *façade* to society. It is against this conception of marriage that, in the last analysis, M. Hervieu directs his weapons. And he is at no loss to show, with the full brilliancy of his execution, the evil and the sorrow that arise from the pressure of such meaningless bondage. It is to be remembered, on the other hand, that marriage, however high and free its original motives, has a habit, in this work-a-day world, of becoming an institution into which are inextricably knotted all the strands that bind men and women

to their kind. Hence its dissolution may be, in the totality of consequences, more widely tragic than even a hunger of the heart.

To views of this character M. Hervieu has come very close in *Le Réveil* (1905) and *Connais-toi* (1909). These two plays belong, of course, to the latest and, I suspect, the final period of his development—the anti-romantic. It is not a false or pinchbeck romance that M. Hervieu deprecates, but two notions, both Christian and romantic, and both deeply rooted in the consciousness of Western society—the beauty of romantic passion, the nobility of romantic honour. Rapt to their heights of passionate enchantment Thérèse Megée and Prince Jean in *Le Réveil* are made suddenly to feel the touch of our real destiny and of our real duties. And at that touch the enchantment vanishes. At once they see each other and their passion in the light of common day and it falls away from them like an outworn garment. In *Connais-toi*, by a quieter and more masterly course of dramatic reasoning, General Sibéran is brought to see that beyond the traditional notions of romantic honour and revenge there watches in the human heart a better and more patient vision. M. Hervieu's last play *Bagatelle* (1912) is larger in spirit and mellower

than any of these. Its theme is the vanity of all mere vanities; its warning that we curb the errors of our own inconstant hearts.

Twice only has M. Hervieu turned aside from the exposition of moral ideas: once in his historical play *Théroigne de Méricourt* (1902), and once in that very skilful but somewhat factitious display of stage-craft *L'Énigme* (1901). In the remaining eight plays the moral conception is supreme. Nor need it surprise even the non-Latin student of the drama that six of these eight plays deal with adultery. For around the relations of the sexes in marriage are gathered many of those fundamental impulses which guide our opinions and our conduct. Nevertheless I cannot believe that the name of a great master will be permanently given to one whose intensity of moral insight is won at the cost of such vast exclusions. But that intensity of insight is his, and a power of reasoning in dramatic form analogous to Dryden's power of reasoning in poetic form. To the French playwright, as to the English poet, were given energy and intellectual intensity; to neither, that larger vision that sees life not only steadily but sees it whole.

V

M. Jules Lemaître (b. 1853) is not a member of any school or movement; he pleads for no definite ideas, for no special view of life. Even his technique recalls, at times, the older procedures of Augier and Dumas *fils*. He is not even afraid to close a play by means of the quite vicious trick of a sudden turn in the psychology of his characters, as witness the endings of *Révoltée* (1889) and of *L'Age difficile* (1895). In a word, his methods are eclectic. The great critic, the wise and exquisite master of *Les Contemporains*, stands above the literature which he has described so incomparably—"the intelligent, restless, mad, sombre, unguided literature of the second half of the nineteenth century" [1]—with an air of friendly but serene detachment. He understands all the artistic battles of his time too well to be induced to serve under any standard.

The individual note, however, which M. Lemaître has contributed to the drama of his period is that of a sane and liberal humanity. His is neither the contemptuous tolerance of Lavedan nor the noisy Puritanism of Brieux. A spirit that has dwelt imaginatively in all times and in all literatures is incapable of either extreme. Hence

[1] *Les Contemporains.* Vol. I, p. 239.

the surface of his dramatic work is never hard and brittle but always suffused with the warm glow of life. His understanding charity embraces the "fault" of Mme. de Voves in *Révoltée* and the almost attractive corruption of Yoyo—significant syllables!—in *L'Age difficile*, as well as the antics of the amusing players in *Flipote* (1893). Life having been in all ages a matter so incalculable and mysterious, our vices and our virtues being equally immemorial, M. Lemaître does not feel that he can afford a vain severity. He understands his people; that is enough. I do not wish to convey the impression that M. Lemaître has not his moral preferences or fails to see that the practical business of the world needs definite moral adjustments. He has expressed himself unmistakably to that effect through the withering portrait of a political opportunist and self-seeker in *Le Député Leveau* (1890).

He has concentrated all the most charming qualities of his dramatic talent in *Le Pardon* (1895). The play has three full-sized acts, observes the unity of place, and has only three characters—the smallest number in any modern drama. It follows that, in a sense, the play is really all talk, but that talk was written by one of the major prose artists of French litera-

ture and, furthermore, reveals M. Lemaître as a psychologist equal in acuteness and delicacy to any of his period. The theme of the play is, I had almost said inevitably, that of marital infidelity, around which, despite M. Brieux's denial in *La Française*, the interest of French society and literature so largely turns. Suzanne, conventionally married off at eighteen, is left to herself too much in the enforced idleness of the modern woman. Her husband Georges, though exclusively devoted to her, is often absent in the pursuit of his affairs. In her idleness and loneliness Suzanne slips into a loveless intrigue. Georges discovers it, drives her out, and leaves to take a position in the factory of a former playmate's husband. Thérèse, his old friend, now secretly summons Suzanne to her home (where the action of the play is laid) and by a train of very fine psychological reasoning which reveals Georges' most intimate desires to himself, persuades him to pardon his wife. To pardon her! There lies the difficulty. She cannot teach him to forget. He torments Suzanne with questions, unworthy suspicions and cruel innuendoes. The memory of the tremendous physical fact is like an inexpugnable poison in his blood. His single consolation is in his walks with Thérèse, in whom he con-

fides, who consoles him, and who, alas, has always loved him. The result is only too natural and Suzanne is clearly enough instructed when Georges, no longer upbraiding her or torturing himself, exclaims: "Let us not be dramatic and sensitive. That's the mistake!" She does not feel that she has the right to reproach him; but she turns bitterly upon Thérèse. Poor Thérèse, however, has discovered by this time that Georges does not really love her; that it was his wounded love for his wife that threw him into her arms. She expiates her wrong by this humiliating confession and leaves Georges and Suzanne alone. And now? Georges has searched his heart and discovered that the keenest sting of Suzanne's unfaithfulness was to his outraged male vanity. That sting is now blunted, that vanity is now assuaged. They are both miserable sinners, and in the recognition of their common frailty may love each other again. The psychology is exquisite, the dialogue of an extreme and plangent beauty. The play rises beyond argument and analysis to a sad vision of the heart of man. We are not assured that Georges and Suzanne will be happy; we have only felt that they are human and sincere.

M. Lemaître's range of subject-matter has

been wide and he has written plays of very varying moods. *Marriage blanc* (1891) is a study in morbid psychology flooded with that dry, hard sunshine which invalids watch in the South of France; *Flipote* is a satiric comedy which one might almost call high-spirited; *L'Age difficile* is a satiric treatment of a sufficiently tragic subject —the loneliness of age. But here, as elsewhere, the wise and tender humanity of M. Lemaître sounds its clarifying and reconciling note.

His activity as a dramatist has been circumscribed rather narrowly, nor has it ever reached a very large public. Its qualities of ease and grace and philosophic temperateness make one regret that it is not the drama rather than politics that has robbed the world of several volumes by the greatest of the living critics of literature.[1]

Beautifully written dialogue and a mellow humanity ally the dramas of M. Maurice Donnay (b. 1859) to those of M. Jules Lemaître. To these qualities M. Donnay adds an almost lyric note of speech and—in the majority of his plays —the best structural technique on the French stage. M. Donnay has found it possible to dis-

[1] Now, alas, no longer among the living. But these pages may stand as I wrote them.

pense wholly with plot, with artificial rearrangement of events, with mere cleverness of combination. Like the Germanic playwrights, he simply lets life unfold itself. The situations in his plays are states of soul and these merge into each other according to the succession of reality, not according to the pattern of the theatre. Even when pleading for an idea, his concern for it is a marvel of discretion. The play is over before his process of insensible persuasion becomes retrospectively clear.

His subject is love—modern love. Of its troubles, its difficulties, its tragedies, he is as acutely aware as M. de Porto-Riche. But to him —and in this he differs from the older dramatist —its delights and memories appear the fairest

"Part of our lives' unalterable good."

Neither his attempts at Aristophanic satire nor his criticisms of a depraved society contribute so rare and individual a note to the modern French drama as does the *haec olim meminisse juvat* which vibrates in the passion of *Amants* (1895), *L'Autre Danger* (1905), and even, at its close, of *Les Éclaireuses* (1913).

I am tempted to call *Amants* a modern *Romeo and Juliet*. It is easy to anticipate the answer:

A very modern *Romeo and Juliet* indeed! No doubt. Yet one might easily indicate the theme of the two plays in the same words: Two human beings who love each other utterly are separated by social and moral barriers peculiar to their time and place and character. Shakespeare's young Italians die; M. Donnay's modern French lovers separate and each marries some one else. Yet I am convinced, paradoxical as it may seem, that Claudine Rozay and Vetheuil had a far deeper capacity for tragic grief than those young amorists of the Renaissance. They seem grey enough by comparison. No Shakespeare has lent them the divine energy of his verse; they are intelligent members of a highly complex society which furnishes them with duties and restraints. A dagger and a tomb are fine properties with which to make a brave show on the stage of this world. But that brief and almost harsh farewell which Claudine and Vetheuil say to each other by the shores of the Mediterranean has the high and tragic beauty of all entire sincerity of suffering. That, after an interval of time, these lovers can meet again with a sad equanimity and that each can pursue his way does not cheapen them when rightly thought upon. The best that was in each was given to the other. Time could not rob them

of their past. And it is braver to live than to die: more difficult to be than not to be.

A wise and noble resignation to the inevitable rather than a vain striving and crying is characteristic of M. Donnay's people. Consider the fate of Claire Jadain in *L'Autre Danger*. Her husband is an impossible person—self-opinionated, tyrannical, meanly envious. For four years the love of Freydières compensates her for all the sterile spaces of her past. Though their love must live a shadowy existence, since her maternal duties bind her to her home, it has come to mean to her the whole of life. Then comes, by imperceptible degrees that "other danger" which, despite the innumerable French studies of passion, is here pointed out for the first time. Claire's daughter Madeleine has become a woman in the four years, and Madeleine loves Freydières. At her first ball the young girl hears an evil whisper coupling the names of Freydières and her mother. It is like a death blow to her white soul. And it is evident to Claire that only by a complete annihilation of self can she give the lie to the rumour and—in the truest sense—save her child's life and the sacredness of her own motherhood. She addresses herself to the terrible task of revealing to Freydières (what she has never yet

dared to admit even to herself) that he, too, loves Madeleine. "I ought to have foreseen that some day Madeleine would be eighteen; but one never thinks of that other danger." Freydières struggles against the spiritual monstrousness of the situation, but Claire sends Madeleine to him. Silence and resignation are her portion. The closest observation went to the making of the play, the unravelling of almost invisible psychical threads. A coarse hand would have made the fable revolting. It is beautiful and tragic here.

M. Donnay's latest play, which served to inaugurate a new Parisian theatre—*La Comédie Marigny*—depicts the very advanced feminists of the French capital. These ladies (*Les Éclaireuses*) are extremely alive nor are they without many admirable traits. Indeed there is no limit to M. Donnay's generosity to them. The protagonist of the play and chief practical supporter of *l'école féministe* is Mme. Jeanne Dureille who gets a divorce from her husband simply because the social male cannot strip himself of those authoritative airs which society has so long accorded him. Jeanne now lives in complete devotion to the Cause. But gradually and by imperceptible degrees a curious shadow steals over her inner life. And, in the end, there flickers from that shadow

—a light. She really left her husband because, in the obscure hiding-places of the heart, she loved Jacques Leholloy. She gives herself to him and finally, amid the inevitable annoyances of life, flees to the shelter of his home and love. This household will be a very modern one, no doubt; Jacques is a feminist himself. But M. Donnay at least permits one to suspect that many traditional elements will gently steal back into this modern *ménage*. For Jacques admits that the crude radicalism of nineteen hundred is no longer his. It is now nineteen hundred and thirteen. And Jeanne comes to him for the oldest and best reason of all—seeking a friend, indeed, but also a husband and protector.

It is the engaging sincerity of M. Donnay that makes him one of the most delightful of modern dramatists. His observation is honest and exact. Nor, granting its fundamental artifice, is it easy to praise too highly the eloquent modulations of his prose. His work is not that of a very great spirit but of a gifted and kindly gentleman who understands his fellow-creatures well enough to forgive them, invariably—for what they are.

VI

From this interpretative description of the chief playwrights of modern France and of their work, several significant facts, I trust, appear at once: This drama is based upon an observation that is often very exact within its limits but, except for occasional acts and scenes by M. Brieux, neither many-sided nor solid. The life it treats is, as a rule, the life of those who need neither toil nor spin. The common people, the middle classes, are left, once more except by M. Brieux, almost in silence. Yet even the life of these admirable idlers is not touched at very many points, and one's final impression of them is that of creatures of but two dimensions. Love and passion do, no doubt, play a very large part in life, especially in such lives. But these elegant and interesting persons must, after all, have had a hundred other concerns, a hundred other contacts with reality. This criticism is not made in the service of a cheap moral rigidness. The weakness of this drama is not in what it gives, but in what it fails to give. Life in it is reduced to a few terms and these terms are far too often the same. A great and full-bodied art is more inclusive. Emma Bovary had her affairs too, and these affairs were

decisive factors in her fate. But that fate and life was magnificently founded in time and place and those humble but enduring things and activities that form the dense texture of human existence. Nor is that tenuousness of representation inherent in the form of the drama. A series of notable playwrights, from Becque to Galsworthy, have proven the contrary.

Nor, finally, am I willing to believe that persons so extraordinarily intelligent and fine-fibred as the characters of Porto-Riche and Hervieu, Lemaître and Donnay, are so utterly incapable of rising, if but for a moment, above the immediate illusions of life, or are so helplessly driven by the cruel flux of the phenomenal world. Do they never cast off that illusion? Do they never feel some cool wind from the shores of a larger order? Is a worldly resignation their last resort? Do they never rise beyond social values, and are truths of a merely social observation, however exquisitely subtle, their only refuge? A man, let us assume, is smitten by some cruel grief or dishonour—Doncières in *Connais-toi*, Georges in *Le Passé*. From the throbbing heat of his human habitation, from the faces worn with sorrow and shame, from the voices that sob or plead, he goes out into the open. The hills curve dark against

the sky, the ancient stones of the earth are patient under the stars. And the man, freed from the immediate passion of the hour, remembers the generations of the dead who, too, have tasted this pang, this shame, and he remembers the vastness of the eternal order. He may hope that in that order a divine vigilance is awake, or he may despair of such a hope. But he has shaken off, for one hour, the insistent illusions of mortality, and that hour will vibrate in his life and speech. Such an incident is typical, I take it, of a thousand. It cannot appear on the stage. But we may hear its liberating echo in the words of men. They are freed from the laws of the transitory and united to the universe in which they live. That echo, that note of liberation, is never heard in the drama of contemporary France. Hence from a body of work so brilliant, so alluring, so intelligent and, within its own limits, so true, I turn with something not unlike relief to the more sombre but profounder dramatic literature of Germany and England.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NATURALISTIC DRAMA IN GERMANY

I

The drama of modern Germany has broken more completely with the past than any other body of contemporary literature. To a recognition of the empty and meaningless artifice of the technique of Scribe, Sardou and even Dumas *fils*, the Germans added a national antipathy to a form of art not only base but foreign, not only foreign but all-powerful. The society play of the older French school, transferred to German conditions by Paul Lindau, Oscar Blumenthal and others, monopolised the stage during the years that immediately followed the establishment of the empire. The sounding historical plays of Ernst von Wildenbruch brought a larger air into the weary disillusion that held the theatres. But here was, after all, no new art, no sense of liberation for the young revolutionists who crowded the Berlin *cafés* and prophesied a dawn of which no actual glimmer had yet appeared on the dull horizon.

They had all, or nearly all, a pathetic faith in modern science. Hence they were forced, once more, to turn to France where alone, in the pseudo-naturalism of Zola, science had apparently created a literature in its own spirit. But this literature was neither new in the eighties, nor was it in dramatic form. The Goncourts, Zola, Daudet, had never succeeded in conquering the theatre for naturalism. The Scandinavian theatre was not yet a living force in Europe, nor could the young Germans have learned anything new from the methods of Ibsen. Hence, for some years, the drama hovered between two worlds, "one dead, the other powerless to be born." But even to the distant observer of to-day there floats a sense of the stir, the hope, the passionate and prophetic strife of those obscure days in which the germs of the modern drama were ripening in the souls of unguided and still inglorious youths.

Societies were formed and programmes written and periodicals founded. The cry that arose with such generous earnestness from all these movements was for an art that should mirror, and thus implicitly interpret, the contemporary and the real—this immediate world whose sting and pang and savour and visible form are the actual contents of our experience and of our lives.

This world was not to be shattered and rebuilt according to the conventions of the theatre. Art was to triumph over itself, to transcend itself; to become, in the fullest sense, a vicarious experience through which we might learn to pity the fate of others and to endure our own.

It is abundantly clear that such an art—an art which was to create the complete illusion of reality—needed methods that had never, consciously, and purposefully at least, been practised before. There are, no doubt, pages of human speech in Fielding to which the most consistent naturalist could add nothing. But that fact was quite unknown in Berlin in the winter of 1887, when Arno Holz and Johannes Schlaf withdrew to the frozen fields of a suburb and founded a new art.

German criticism has dealt out scant justice to the major if not the senior member of this literary firm: Arno Holz. But German criticism is at times petulant and finds it hard to keep its eye on the object and away from the man, the theory or the clique. It takes no very deep insight to understand the shortcomings of Arno Holz. He is cocksure, he is truculent, he is almost ignorant. His theoretical writings make one wonder how so clever a man could have writ-

ten so foolishly. But there dwells in him a fresh dexterity of literary technique that amounts to genius. There is no species of writing that he has not touched; there is none that he has not adorned. No, adorned is too cheap a word—rejuvenated, rather, and created anew! He snapped his fingers in the face of many pompous idols of the tribe and made possible the modern drama.

The task he set himself was the representation of life through the authentic speech of men—not speech rewritten and rearranged in its order, nor, above all, heard with the merely literary instinct, but the humble speech of our daily lives with its elisions, its hesitations and iterations, its half-articulate sounds and cries, but also with its sting and sob and clutch. The first experiments of Holz and Schlaf were sketches (published over the Norwegian pseudonym of Bjarne P. Holmsen, in 1889) in which the new dialogue was surrounded by masses of rather thin narrative. Almost immediately, however, they eliminated the narrative portions and produced the first consistently naturalistic play: *Die Familie Selicke* (1890).

With the perspective of nearly a quarter of a century since the first performance of the play,

and a fair knowledge of what has since been written in dramatic form in France, in Germany and in England, I agree unhesitatingly with Arno Holz's assertion that here first and here only a new domain was won for the art of the theatre. There is no difference in kind, he rightly declared, between the dialogue of Schiller and the dialogue of Ibsen. Both are written literature, not speech overheard. I would not imply, as Holz did, the necessary superiority of the newer over the older art. But it was new. No speech so haunting in its utter reality had ever appeared—except in accidental fragments—on the stage or between the covers of a book. And that speech bit itself into mind after mind; it gave the creative impulse to a whole literature of uncommon beauty and power and volume.

But Holz and Schlaf did not limit themselves to an exact imitation of the elements of speech. They also observed the inevitableness of its psychological succession. Hence the reality of their dialogue banished from *Die Familie Selicke* all factitious action. The play is, in the fullest possible sense, a piece of life observed with stringent closeness and set down with austere veracity. There is but one scene for the three acts, the living-room of poor people; the action takes place

within a few hours. The room is sharply etched in the stage directions; the people are completely visualised. If you met them on the stairs of a house in the north of Berlin, you would recognise them at once—the father, the mother, the two boys, the daughter and her sweetheart. The little that happens is neither new nor striking. Life and death and love appear in their immemorial guise. A good deal of sordidness, a gleam of goodness and self-denial, souls warped by the wrongs of the world: what more does one want?

"Sunt lacrymæ rerum et nos mortalia tangunt."

There are no rejected inheritances or sudden fortunes, as there are even in Hervieu; no lost letters as in Pinero and Lemaître; no swift transformations in the hearts and fates of men. There is, as Fromentin said of Rubens, "no pomp, no ornament, no turbulence, nor grace, nor fine clothing, nor one lovely and useless incident." There is life.

"And life, some think, is worthy of the Muse."

It has been said that such art is merely photographic. But the criticism is superficial. A photograph has neither movement nor expression; it renders the mood of neither the world nor the

soul; there is no laughter in it, no sob, no prayer. It gives a single gesture transfixed by a mechanism. It has been said, too, that such art lacks interpretative power. But the infinite, as Goethe saw, lurks in the finite, if we but pursue the finite far enough. To observe man and his life relentlessly, to set down the results of such observation with complete sincerity, is to be sure, at last, to come upon those ultimate mysteries which escape the snares of circumstance and are free of the arbitrament of mortality. To such an interpretation of the world the finest validity belongs. To draw a moral, to preach a doctrine, is like shouting at the north star. Life is a vast and awful business. The great artist sets down his vision of it and is silent. There are neither social panaceas nor short cuts to cheerful living in the *Iliad* or in *Lear*. Now it is the merit of the naturalistic drama of modern Germany—of the drama of Hauptmann and Halbe, of Hirschfeld and Schnitzler—to have set down a vision of life that coincides remarkably with the humble truth. Nothing that is human has been alien to its sight, to its compassion, to its power of representation. It has grappled with reality on closer terms than any other literature of which we have knowledge. Therein resides its power and, I believe, its permanent value. And of this art the theory and

the first complete example are due to Arno Holz and Johannes Schlaf. Holz showed his sketches and his play in manuscript to Gerhart Hauptmann before the Silesian dramatist had written *Before Dawn*, and Hauptmann is the pre-eminent master of the modern German drama both in its naturalistic and in its neo-romantic phases. Hence, *Die Familie Selicke* was an artistic achievement of historic significance, and a description of it the necessary prologue to the development in the art of the theatre with which this chapter deals

II

In one of his rare fragments of lyrical verse Gerhart Hauptmann (b. 1862) has described, with insight and exactness, his own character as a creative artist. "Let thy soul, O poet, be like an Æolian harp, stirred by the gentlest breath. Eternally must its strings vibrate under the breathing of the world's woe. For the world's woe is the root of our heavenward yearning. Thus will thy songs be rooted in the world's woe, but the heavenly light will shine upon their crown." In this view, it is clear, the artist is essentially passive. And so, in fact, the naturalistic artist must be. He must not break in upon

the vision of life; his imagination rounds out and completes; it does not change the reality which experience furnishes. But that reality—so sensitively observed and so greatly rendered—has always inspired Hauptmann with a boundless compassion. To him the world's life has been the world's woe; his very austerity and apparent harshness pay tribute to the sacredness of human sorrow. Such a temperament adopted the technique of the naturalistic drama not only as an artistic but as an ethical act. It sought the tragic beauty that is in truth and almost instinctively rejected all the traditional devices of dramaturgic technique. From such a point of view artifice is not only futile, it is wrong. There could be, in the drama of Hauptmann, no complication of plot, no culmination of the resultant struggle in merely effective scenes, no superior articulateness on the part of the characters. There could be no artistic beginning, for life comes shadowy from life; there could be no artistic ending, for the play of life ends only in eternity.

This view of the drama's relation to life leads, naturally, to the exclusion of many devices. Thus Hauptmann, unlike the playwrights of France, but like Ibsen and Galsworthy, avoids

the division of acts into scenes. The coming and going of characters has the unobtrusiveness but seldom violated in life; the inevitable artifice of entrance and exit is held within rigid bounds. In some of his earlier dramas he also observed the unities of time and place, and throughout his work practises close economy in these respects. It goes without saying that he rejects the monologue, the unnatural reading of letters, the *raisoneur* or commenting and providential character, the lightly motivised confession—all the devices in brief, by which even Hervieu and Lemaître, Wilde and Pinero, blandly transport information across the footlights, or unravel the artificial knot which they have tied.

In dialogue, the medium of the drama, Hauptmann adds to the reality of Holz a complete effortlessness. Hence beside the speech of his characters all other dramatic speech seems conscious and merely literary. Nor is that marvellous veracity in the handling of his medium a mere control of dialect. Johannes Vockerat and Michael Kramer, Dr. Scholz and Professor Crampton, speak with a human raciness and native truth not surpassed by the weavers or peasants of Silesia. Hauptmann has heard the in-

flections of the human voice, the faltering and fugitive eloquence of the living word, not only with his ears but with his soul.

External devices necessarily contribute to this effect. Thus Hauptmann renders all dialect with phonetic accuracy and correct differentiation. In *Before Dawn* (1889) Hoffmann, Loth, Dr. Schimmelpfennig and Helen speak normal high German; all the other characters speak the Silesian except the imported footman Eduard who uses the Berlin dialect. In *The Beaver Coat* (1893) the various gradations of that dialect are scrupulously set down, from the impudent vulgarity of Leontine and Adelaide to the occasional consonantal slips of Wehrhahn. The egregious Mrs. Wolff, in the same play, cannot deny her Silesian origin. Far finer shades of character are indicated by the amiable elisions of Mrs. Vockerat, Senior, in *Lonely Lives* (1891), the recurrent crassness of Mrs. Scholz in *The Reconciliation* (1890) and the solemn reiterations of *Michael Kramer* (1900). Nor must it be thought that such characterisation has anything in common with the set phrases of Dickens. From the richness and variety of German colloquial speech, from the deep brooding of the German soul upon the common things and the

enduring emotions of life, Hauptmann has caught the authentic accents that change dramatic dialogue into the speech of man.

In the structure of his drama Hauptmann, again following and surpassing the theory and practice of Holz, met and solved an even more difficult problem than in the character of his dialogue. He rejects the whole tradition of structural technique. And he is able to do so by reason of his intimate contact with the normal truth of things. In life, for instance, the conflict of will with will, the passionate crises of human existence, are but rarely concentrated into a brief space of time or culminate in a highly salient situation. Long and wearing attrition, and crises that are seen to have been such only in the retrospect of calmer years, are the rule. Hence instead of effective rearrangement Hauptmann contents himself with the austere simplicity of that succession of action which observation really affords. The intrusion of a new force into a given setting, as in *Lonely Lives*, is as violent an interference with the sober course of things as he admits. From his noblest successes, *The Weavers* (1892), *Drayman Henschel* (1898), *Michael Kramer* (1900), *Rose Bernd* (1903), the artifice of complication is wholly absent.

It follows that his fables are simple and devoid of plot, that comedy and tragedy must inhere in character, and that conflict must grow from the clash of character with environment or of character with character in its totality. In other words: Since the unwonted and adventurous are rigidly excluded, dramatic complication can but rarely, with Hauptmann, proceed from action. For the life of man is woven of "little, nameless, unremembered acts" which possess no significance except as they illustrate character and thus, link by link, forge that fate which is identical with character. The constant and bitter conflict in the world does not arise from pointed and opposed notions of honour and duty held at some rare climacteric moment, but from the far more tragic grinding of a hostile environment upon man or of the imprisonment of alien souls in the cage of some social bondage.

These two motives, appearing sometimes singly, sometimes blended, are fundamental to Hauptmann's work. In *The Reconciliation* an unnatural marriage has brought discord and depravity upon earth; in *Lonely Lives* a seeker after truth is throttled by a murky world; in *The Weavers* the whole organisation of society drives men to tragic despair; in *The Beaver Coat* the

motive is ironically inverted and a base shrewdness triumphs over the social machine; in *Rose Bernd* traditional righteousness hounds a pure spirit out of life; and in *Gabriel Schilling's Flight* (written in 1906) Hauptmann returns to a favourite motive: Woman, strong through the narrowness and intensity of her elemental aims destroying man, the thinker and dreamer whose will, dissipated in an hundred ideal purposes, goes under in the unequal struggle.

The fable and structure of *Michael Kramer* well illustrate Hauptmann's typical themes and methods. The whole of the first act is exposition. It is not, however, the exposition of antecedent actions or events. It is wholly of character. The conditions of the play are entirely static. Kramer's greatness of soul broods over the whole act from which his person is absent. Mrs. Kramer, the narrow-minded, nagging wife, and Arnold, the homely, wretched boy with a spark of genius, quail under that spirit. Michaline, the brave, whole-hearted girl, stands among these, pitying and comprehending all. In the second act one of Arnold's sordid and piteous mistakes comes to light. An innkeeper's daughter complains to Kramer of his son's grotesque and annoyingly expressed passion for her. Kramer

takes his son to task and, in one of the noblest scenes in the modern drama, wrestles with the boy's soul. In the third act the inn is shown. Its rowdy, semi-educated *habitués* deride Arnold with coarse gibes. He cannot tear himself away. Madly sensitive and conscious of his final superiority over a world that crushes him by its merely brutal advantages, he is goaded to destruction. In the last act, in the presence of his dead son, Michael Kramer cries out after some reconciliation with the silent universe. The play is done and nothing has happened. The only action is Arnold's suicide and that action has no dramatic value. The significance of the play lies in the unequal marriage between Kramer and his wife, in Arnold's character—in the fact that such things *are*, and that in our outlook upon the whole of life we must reckon with them.

Hauptmann's simple management of a pregnant fable may be admirably observed, finally, by comparing *Lonely Lives* and *Rosmersholm* (1886). Hauptmann was undoubtedly indebted to Ibsen for his problem and for the main elements of the story: A modern thinker is overcome by the orthodox and conservative world in which he lives. And that world conquers largely because he cannot be united to the woman who

is his inspiration and his strength. In handling this fable two difficult questions were to be answered by the craftsman: By what means does the hostile environment crush the protagonist? Why cannot he take the saving hand that is held out to him? Ibsen practically shirks the answer to the first question. For it is not the bitter zealot Kroll, despite his newspaper war and his scandal-mongering, who breaks Rosmer's strength. It is fate, fate in the dark and ancient sense. "The dead cling to Rosmersholm"—that is the key-note of the play. The answer to the second question is interwoven with an attempt to rationalise the fatality that broods over Rosmersholm. The dead cling to it because a subtle and nameless wrong has been committed against them. And that sin has been committed by the woman who could save Rosmer. At the end of the second act Rebecca refuses to be his wife. The reason for that refusal, dimly prefigured, absorbs his thoughts, and through two acts of consummate dramaturgic suspense the sombre history is gradually unfolded. And no vague phrases concerning the ennobling of humanity can conceal the central fact: the play derives its power from a traditional plot and a conventional mo-

tive—crime and its discovery, sin and its retribution.

In *Lonely Lives* the two questions apparently treated in *Rosmersholm* are answered, not in the terms of effective dramaturgy, but of life itself. Johannes Vockerat lives in the midst of the world that must undo him, subtly irritated by all to which his heart clings. Out of that world he has grown and he cannot liberate himself from it. His good wife and his admirable parents are bound to the conventional in no base or fanatical sense. He dare scarcely tell them that their preoccupations, that their very love, slays the ideal in his soul. And so the pitiless attrition goes on. There is no action: there is being. The struggle is rooted in the deep divisions of men's souls, not in unwonted crime and plotting. And Anna Mahr, the free woman of a freer world, parts from Johannes because she recognises their human unfitness to take up the burden of tragic sorrow which any union between them must create. The time for such things has not come and may never come. Thus Johannes is left desolate, powerless to face the unendurable emptiness and decay that lie before him, destroyed by the conflicting loyalties to personal and ideal ends

which are fundamental to the life of creative thought.

Drama, then, which relies so little upon external action, but finds action rather in "every inner conflict of passions, every consequence of diverging thoughts" must stress the obscurest expression of such passions and such thoughts. Since its fables, furthermore, are to arise from the immediate data of life, it must equally emphasise the significant factor of those common things amid which man passes his struggle. And so the naturalistic drama of Hauptmann and his school was forced to introduce elements of description and exposition usually held alien to the *genre*. Briefly, it has dealt largely and powerfully with atmosphere, environment and gesture; it has expanded and refined the stage-direction beyond all precedent and made of it an important element of dramatic art.

The playwrights of the middle of the last century who made an effort to lead the drama back to reality, knew nothing of this element. Nor have the masters of the contemporary stage in France adopted it. Augier does not even suspect its existence; in Robertson it is a matter of "properties" and "business." Any appearance of this kind Hauptmann avoids as do, after him,

Shaw and Galsworthy and Granville Barker. The play is not to remind us of the stage, but of life. A difference in vision and method difficult to estimate divides Robertson's direction: "Sam. (astonished L. corner)" from Hauptmann's: "Mrs. John rises mechanically and cuts a slice from a loaf of bread as though under the influence of suggestion." Robertson indicates the conventionalised gesture of life; Hauptmann, its moral and spiritual density.

The descriptive stage direction, effectively used by Ibsen, is further expanded by Hauptmann. But it remains impersonal and never becomes direct comment or even argument as in Shaw. It is used not only to suggest the scene but, above all, its atmosphere, its mood. Through it Hauptmann shows his keen sense of the interaction between man and his world and the high moral expressiveness of common things. To define the mood more clearly he describes the hour and the weather. The action of *Rose Bernd* opens on a bright Sunday morning in May; that of *Drayman Henschel* during a bleak February dawn. The desperate souls in *The Reconciliation* meet on a snow-swept Christmas eve; the sun has just set over the lake in which Johannes Vockerat at last finds rest. In these indications Hauptmann

rarely aims at either irony or symbolism. He is guided by a sense for the probabilities of life which he expresses through such interactions between the moods of man and nature as experience seems to offer. Only in *The Maidens of the Mount* has the suave autumnal weather a deeper meaning, for it was clearly Hauptmann's purpose in this play

> "To build a shadowy isle of bliss
> Midmost the beating of the steely sea."

Hauptmann has also become increasingly exacting in the demand that the actor simulate the personal appearance of his characters as they arose in his imagination, and has visualised their minutest gestures with remarkable concreteness. His directions often tax the mimetic art of the stage to the very verge of its power. By means of them, however, he has placed within narrow limits the activity of stage-manager and actor. They are not his collaborators; they are his interpreters merely. He alone is the creator of his drama, and no alien factitiousness is allowed to obscure its final aim—the creation of living men.

In the third act of *The Rats* (1911) the ex-stage-manager Hassenreuter is drawn by his

pupil, young Spitta, into an argument concerning the nature of tragedy. "Of the heights of humanity you know nothing," Hassenreuter hotly declares. "You asserted the other day that in certain circumstances a barber or a scrubwoman could as fitly be the subject of tragedy as Lady Macbeth or King Lear." To which Spitta calmly replies: "Before art, as before the law, all men are equal." From this doctrine Hauptmann has never departed, although his interpretation of it has never been fanatical. Throughout his work, however, there is a careful disregard of several classes of his countrymen: the nobility, the bureaucracy (with the notable exception of Wehrhahn in *The Beaver Coat*), the capitalists. He has devoted himself in his naturalistic plays to the life of the common people, of the middle classes and of creative thinkers.

The delineation of all these characters has two constant qualities: objectivity and justice. The author has not merged the sharp outlines of humanity into the background of his own idiosyncrasy. These men and women are themselves. No trick of speech, no lurking similarity of thought, unites them to each other or to the mind that shaped them. The nearer any two of them tend to approach a recognisable type, the more magnificently

is the individuality of each vindicated. The elderly middle-class woman, harassed by ignoble cares ignobly borne, driven by a lack of fortitude into querulousness, and into injustice by the selfishness of her affections, is illustrated both by Mrs. Scholz and Mrs. Kramer. But, in the former, bodily suffering and nervous terror have slackened the moral fibre, and this abnormality speaks through every word and gesture. Mrs. Kramer is simply average, with the tenacity and the corroding power of the average.

Another noteworthy group is that of the three Lutheran clergymen: Kolin in *Lonely Lives*, Kittelhaus in *The Weavers*, and Spitta, Senior, in *The Rats*. Kolin has the utter sincerity which can afford to be trivial and not cease to be lovable; Kittelhaus is the conscious time-server whose opinions might be anything; Spitta struggles for his official convictions, half blinded by the allurements of a world which it is his duty to denounce. Each is wholly himself; no hint of critical irony defaces his character; and thus each is able, implicitly, to put his case with the power inherent in the genuinely and recognisably human. From the same class of temperaments—one that he does not love—Hauptmann has had the justice to draw two characters of basic importance in

Lonely Lives. The elder Vockerats are excessively limited in their outlook on life. It is, indeed, in its time and place, an impossible outlook. These two people have nothing to recommend them save their goodness, but it is a goodness so keenly felt, so radiantly human, that the conflict of the play is deepened and complicated by the question whether the real tragedy be not the pain endured by these kindly hearts, rather than the destruction of their more arduous son.

All these may be said to be minor characters. Some of them are, in that they scarcely affect the fable involved. But in no other sense are there minor figures in Hauptmann's plays. A few lines suffice, and a human being stands squarely upon the living earth, with all his mortal perplexities in his words and voice. Such characters are the tutor Weinhold in *The Weavers*, the painter Lachmann in *Michael Kramer;* Dr. Boxer in *The Conflagration* (1901) and Dr. Schimmelpfennig in *Before Dawn*.

In his artists and thinkers Hauptmann has illustrated the excessive nervousness of the age. Michael Kramer rises above it; Johannes Vockerat and Gabriel Schilling succumb. And beside these men there usually arises the sharply realised figure of the destroying woman—innocent

and helpless in Käthe Vockerat, trivial and obtuse in Alwine Lachmann, or impelled by a devouring sexual egotism in Eveline Schilling and Hanna Elias.

Hauptmann's creative power culminates, however, as he approaches the common folk. These are of two kinds: the Berlin populace and the Silesian peasantry. The world of the former in all its shrewdness, impudence and varied lusts, he has set down with cruel and quiet exactness in *The Beaver Coat* and *The Conflagration.* Mrs. Wolff, the protagonist of both plays, rises into a figure of epic breadth—a sordid and finally almost tragic embodiment of worldliness and cunning. When he approaches the peasants of his own countryside his touch is less hard, his method not quite so remorseless. And thus, perhaps, it comes about, that in the face of these characters the art of criticism can only set down a confirmatory: "They are!" Old Deans in *The Heart of Midlothian*, Tulliver and the Dodson sisters in *The Mill on the Floss*, illustrate the nature of Hauptmann's incomparable projection of simple men and women. Here, in Dryden's phrase, is God's plenty. The morose pathos of Beipst (*Before Dawn*); the vanity and faithfulness of Friebe (*The Reconciliation*); the sad

fatalism of Hauffe (*Drayman Henschel*); the instinctive kindliness of the nurse and the humorous fortitude of Mrs. Lehmann (*Lonely Lives*); the vulgar good nature of Liese Bänsch (*Michael Kramer*); the trivial despair of Pauline and the primitive passion of Mrs. John (*The Rats*); the massive greatness of old Hilse's rock-like patience and the sudden impassioned protest of Luise (*The Weavers*); the deep trouble of Henschel's simple soul and the hunted purity of Rose Bernd—these qualities and these characters transcend the convincingness of mere art. Like the rain-drenched mould, the black trees against the sky, the noise of the earth's waters, they are among the abiding elements of a native and familiar world.

Such is the naturalistic drama of Hauptmann. By employing the real speech of man, by emphasising being rather than action, by creating the very atmosphere and gesture of life, it succeeds in presenting characters whose vital truth achieves the intellectual beauty and moral energy of great art. I can not sum up his work in its totality here. For Hauptmann is also a poet and thus the most distinguished figure in the neo-romantic movement in Germany. But by his work as a naturalist he has not only created a

new art; he has added unforgettable figures to the world of the imagination—figures that ally him to the great projectors of human character, to Fielding, to Thackeray, to Flaubert.

III

The very year (1889) in which Hauptmann inaugurated his great career with *Before Dawn*, the Lessing Theatre in Berlin achieved one of the most striking successes of the century with a play called *Die Ehre*. Its author was the East Prussian novelist, Hermann Sudermann (b. 1857) whose name, almost obscure until then, was soon to be known more widely than any German dramatist's since Kotzebue. His enemies have not spared him the withering comparison. For it is a notable fact that Sudermann whose work is often, in England and America, coupled with Hauptmann's, is almost totally discredited as a playwright in Germany and is frankly assigned, in most serious criticism, a station among the mere commercial purveyors to the popular stage. The naturalists, led by Hauptmann, have introduced into the German drama ideals of unequalled stringency. No theatrical unveracity in the dramatic treatment of life is tolerated by German criticism; no calculated concession to the

mob is pardoned. The commercial theatre and the art of the drama are rigidly kept apart. Hence no voice has, for some years, been raised for Sudermann. A criticism that detects a touch of artifice in *Rose Bernd* is not likely to be lenient toward the author of *Heimat* (1893) or *Es lebe das Leben* (1902).

But if the foreign critic represents a kind of contemporaneous posterity, it is possible to take a far more moderate view of Sudermann's activity as dramatist. He has undoubtedly retained, in many of his plays, the technique of Dumas *fils* and his contemporaries. His exposition is often shamelessly mechanical, his management of the fable adjusted not to the necessities of the situation but to the fancy of the audience; he uses the providential character—that French *deus ex machina*—and does not shrink from wrenching the whole nature of man for the sake of an effective curtain. On the other hand it can be said that in many of his plays these artifices are much softened. They have been a temptation to his feverishly restless temperament, but a temptation to which he has not always yielded. Nor must it be forgotten that into this discredited and rightly discredited mechanism of the stage he has almost always infused a probity of ob-

servation and a power of shaping character which are akin to the same qualities in his greater and more self-denying contemporaries. Even from amid the wretched clap-trap—the unnatural antitheses, the cheap coincidences, the sudden fortunes—of his first play arose the memorable character of Alma Heinecke, that matchless daughter of the Berlin poor who presents her case with inimitable raciness and truth.

Neither in his next play, *Sodoms Ende* (1890), nor in *Heimat* (1893), to which a grateful rôle has given international notoriety, nor in his later and lurid pictures of Berlin society, *Es lebe das Leben* (1902), *Das Blumenboot* (1906), *Der gute Ruf* (1912), is the best of Sudermann to be found. That best must be sought in an occasional comedy, and in many passages of those plays in which he draws sincerity and strength from his native earth—the bleak and storied shores of the Baltic Sea.

The happiest of the comedies is *Die Schmetterlingsschlacht* (1894). The protagonist of the play is Frau Hergentheim, the widow of a small government official. Her pension is ridiculous and she has three daughters whom she wishes to bring up properly and marry well. But bread is dear and so is oleomargarine, as she explains

in her admirable defence in the last act, and hunger is painful. There was a time, furthermore, when the children were small. And even now their ladylike earnings are wretched enough. But through hunger and humiliation Frau Hergentheim has held fast to her ideal—the only one she knows—not to let her daughters lapse into an inferior social class. Her reward comes to her, but not until she has suffered all the bitterness which the situation holds. Beneath its lightness of mood the play is a serious and arresting study, expressed through living characters, of that Moloch of the lower middle-classes—respectability.

Sudermann's work, during the following six years, showed constant uncertainty and falseness. Only *Fritzchen* in *Morituri* (1896), a one-act tragedy of complete inevitableness rises above the glare and strain of his efforts. That better self of his which has never been quite blunted by haste and success reasserts itself in *Johannisfeuer* (1900). The scene of the play is once more Sudermann's homeland and one has a strong sense of the presence of the strange and ancient wildness of the Lithuanian country-side. There are coincidences, no doubt, and the dialogue is often enough pitched in a false and theatrical key

—though never in a falser key than would be held quite tolerable in Lavedan or Hervieu, in Jones and Pinero. But the reality of Georg and Marikke's tragic love is profoundly brought home to us, and Vogelreuter and Haffke are of a fine and true humanity.

Berlin, the evil genius of his art, drew him once more (*Es lebe das Leben*). But in the very next year (1903) appeared the East Prussian comedy, *Der Sturmgeselle Sokrates*. The discussion of burning political and racial issues has served to obscure the value of this excellent play. Nor has the truth been admitted that Sudermann stands above these issues in an attitude of kindly and philosophic humanity. The very temperate satire of the play is directed against a group of elderly men, democratic idealists of 1848, whose occupation was taken from them and whose hopes were shattered by Bismarck and the establishment of the empire. Their cause is lost. But Hartmeyer, a born fanatic, will not admit it. He continues the secret society of the years of the revolution and carries with him, by main force, his old cronies, the grocer, the schoolmaster and the rabbi. A tragic awakening comes to him when he desires to initiate his sons and the son of his friend into the sacred mysteries of his old

political dreams. For to these youths the new order is a fact and an experience. Of Hartmeyer's older son Fritz it has made a socialist; of Reinhold, the younger, a chauvinist and a snob; the brilliant son of the rabbi explains to his father the harsh realities of social and professional discrimination which, under the empire, are still the portion of the Jew. Hartmeyer is, to be sure, won over in the end. But I detect in Sudermann's final attitude a shadow of sympathy at least for the old democratic ideals which the Prussian *régime* has subordinated to the state's welfare. The character work in the play is admirable, from the delightful rabbi to the girl at the inn which was, for so long, the meeting place of "the companions of the storm."

Since the appearance of *Der Sturmgeselle Sokrates* Sudermann has experimented variously. *Stein unter Steinen* (1905) is a sociological play with a dash of unreal sentiment; *Das Blumenboot* and *Der gute Ruf*, excursions into the feverish life of the West End of Berlin as Sudermann sees it. Aside from all these plays stands *Strandkinder* (1909), a tale of the barbaric North during the Middle Ages when the Teutonic knights sought to subdue the fierce Vikings of the Baltic litoral. Here, as elsewhere, Sudermann mistakes

luridness for power, but there resounds through the play the crying of wild souls, the beat of icy surges, the desperate struggle of an heroic Germanic folk over whom is flung the snare of an alien civilisation. A faint, far echo of that forgotten strength of his ancestors still lives, at times, in Sudermann himself. He has never become utterly subdued to the corruptions that allure him. Although his is no free creation spirit, he has succeeded, again and again, in projecting characters or suggesting an atmosphere which, in any country but his own, would have placed him in the front rank of modern dramatists. If he has sunk to the level of Lavedan and Pinero at their worst, if he has equalled the violence of *Le Duel* and the crass bidding for popularity of *The "Mind the Paint" Girl* (1912), he has also created figures and written scenes which neither his French nor his English contemporary have equalled in reality or imaginative power. Of so much praise only an untenable severity of judgment or the personal animosity of the Berlin press can ever rob him.

IV

The remarkable external successes of Sudermann did nothing to impede the naturalistic

movement in the art of the drama. Hauptmann, its master spirit, illustrated its possibilities and broadened its application year by year. In 1890 appeared *The Reconciliation*, in 1891, *Lonely Lives*. In 1892 he created the naturalistic folk-tragedy in *The Weavers*, in 1893, the naturalistic comedy in *The Beaver Coat*. In each of these years the art of naturalistic dramaturgy gained new recruits. The year 1890 saw Ludwig Fulda's social drama, *Das verlorene Paradis*, 1891, his vigorous and telling *Die Sklavin*. In the same year Arthur Schnitzler began his career as a dramatist —surpassed by Hauptmann and by Hauptmann only—with *Das Märchen*. In 1892 appeared the best play of Johannes Schlaf, *Meister Oelze*, as well as the first mature plays of Max Dreyer, perhaps the weakest of the group (*Drei*), and of the superbly gifted Otto Erich Hartleben (*Hanna Jagert*). The year 1893 finally saw Max Halbe's *Jugend*, Georg Hirschfeld's *Zu Hause* and Ernst Rosmer's (Frau Else Bernstein) *Dämmerung*. Thus the tale of eminent names was rapidly completed and the forms of the naturalistic drama definitely fixed. Of these playwrights one, Ludwig Fulda, abandoned naturalism; Hartleben and Schnitzler informed the *genre* with the force of their high originality; the

delicate gifts of Frau Bernstein found a happier employment in other fields. Hence the immediate school of consistent naturalism and of Hauptmann is represented by Max Halbe, Max Dreyer, and Georg Hirschfeld.

Max Halbe (b. 1865) is a native of West Prussia. His deepest feelings are his love for his homeland—the half Slavic shores of the Vistula—and his poignant regret and *desiderium* for the mad sweetness of youth. These emotions he has dramatised in plays that are almost if not quite great. His imitations of Ibsen, his dealings with a more or less bohemian Berlin life are negligible.

It is difficult to convey a sense of the quality of *Jugend* (1893), Halbe's best play and one of the memorable achievements of the modern drama. The fable amounts to very little. An excellent elderly West Prussian priest, Hoppe, supports his orphaned niece Annchen, aged eighteen, and her imbecile half-brother Amandus. Into this house comes for a brief visit—on his way from the gymnasium to a South German university—a young cousin of the girl's own age, Hans Hartwig. The boy and girl have not seen each other for years; Annchen has had priests

for her only companions; Hans has been under the strict discipline of the German school. The heady sweetness of spring sheds poetry and grace over their suddenly imperious instincts. Almost before the young people are aware, the irreparable has happened. A shot from Amandus, meant for Hans, strikes Annchen and brings the play to a fortuitous close. What glorifies the play, for I can use no lesser word, is the exquisite picture of young love, consciously touched with tragedy, but irresistible, the loveliness of a sane instinct unblunted, unvitiated by the wrongs, the sins, the violences of life. Thus love may have come and almost thus been tasted in some morning of the world. Yet the reality of the scene and of the passion is complete. For a few days these two young creatures forget society, or strive to forget it: Hans, his necessary career, Annchen, her social asset of chastity. That is all. Any other way of ending the play would have served equally well. The lyric cry that may be at the heart of the homeliest reality, the hymn of love that may be heard by the simplest souls, has been uttered.

Those two young lovers reappear in *Mutter Erde* (1897). But Paul Wergenthin and Antoinette had the self-restraint of their finer na-

tures. So life divides them and Paul goes to Berlin, marries a rather unsexed feminist, and seems lost to his youth and his deeper self. But his father's death recalls him home to the bleak land and snowy forests of other days. Here, at the cradle of his race, near the great heart of his mother earth, the falseness and hollowness of his Berlin life becomes clear to him. His feminist wife, an uprooted social vagrant, has only a sneer for ancestral traditions, the fundamental human sanctities that are revived in Paul's heart. He meets his old sweetheart. They are both bound beyond the hope of freedom. Neither can go back to the life of the immediate past, and they ride forth over the wintry plains to love and to death.

Das tausendjährige Reich (1900) is a study in folk psychology. The smith Drewfs is convinced of the coming of the millennium and reads the signs of the times in the light of the Apocalypse. His cruel fanaticism drives his wife to her death. He calls upon God to bear witness to his innocence, and the lightning, that breaks over the village after a long drouth, strikes his smithy. Of a more haunting power and sterner beauty is *Der Strom* (1904). The Vistula is the real protagonist. The frozen stream, threatening to

burst its dikes, looms in its passive majesty above the wrongs and loves of the Doorn family. At the decisive moment of their fate the ice breaks, the country side is in terror, and Peter Doorn, the dike-reeve, is able to expiate his sin in defence of the land and its folk.

All these plays end, it will be observed, in a violent catastrophe. Therein lies Halbe's weakness. He can project, dramatically, with the utmost power, an emotion or a mood. Having done so he has exhausted his peculiar gift; he cannot carry a fable to its simple and convincing conclusion. But he finds us through the memories that our hearts treasure, memories of home and youth and of some landscape that means home and youth to us.

Max Dreyer (b. 1862) a North German from Mecklenburg made his appearance in 1892 with a closely observed and closely woven psychological drama, *Drei*. The verisimilitude of character and dialogue is, as in all the work of this group of men, above reproach. But I am not convinced that Dreyer has contributed any highly personal element to the naturalistic drama. *Winterschlaf* (1895) which is, like Halbe's *Der Strom*, a landscape play, is an admirably com-

petent work of a given order, but no more. Dreyer won his great success in 1899 with *Der Probekandidat*. The drama that exhausts the physical and psychical characteristics of a narrowly delimited milieu or class or profession is among the special kinds that naturalism has cultivated. Dreyer turned his attention to the German gymnasium and the important subject of the freedom of teaching. He presents a young teacher of biology, Dr. Heitmann, who has many reasons for clinging to his position, among them an admirable mother whose last hopes are fixed on him. He is driven out of his profession for refusing to palter with the truth. Around Heitmann are grouped a set of extraordinarily vivid characters—the director of the gymnasium, swayed by every breath of ministerial policy, the church dignitary who is determined that Darwinism shall not corrupt the mind of Christian youth, the teacher who is breaking down under the pressure of intellectual tyranny, and the teacher who imitates and flatters the director for the sake of professional preferment. The dramatic values of the situation are used with a touch of cleverness (especially in the central scene of the faculty meeting) which Hauptmann would disdain, but which never degenerates into

mere external effectiveness. The play enjoyed a very remarkable run on the stage, and gave rise to a number of dramatic interpretations of German school life no less successful than itself. The most amusing of these is Otto Ernst's *Flachsmann als Erzieher* (1901), the most deeply felt and clearly projected, the very moving *Traumulus* (1904) by Arno Holz and Otto Jerschke.

Nearest to Hauptmann in the quality of his gifts and in his mastery of naturalistic technique stands Georg Hirschfeld (b. 1873). Condemned to an early maturity by his Berlin environment and by his race, Hirschfeld has not fulfilled the promise of his marvellous youth. At twenty he wrote *Zu Hause* (1893), at twenty-two, *Die Mütter* (1895), at twenty-five, *Agnes Jordan* (1898). Later he essayed the polemic play of literary life, *Der junge Goldner* (1901), the fairy play, *Der Weg zum Licht* (1902), and even comedy, *Spätfrühling* (1906). None of these later pieces are contemptible, but none are extraordinary. I trust that a second spring of creative vision will come to him: for the present his career may be said to have ended with *Agnes Jordan.*

The three plays of his youth, however, en-

title him to a place among the minor but genuine masters of the modern drama. He shares with the other naturalists the power of creating, without rift or seam, the illusion of reality. He adds thereto the special power of conveying the obscure and intricate life of the soul. His characters yield up to us, especially in *Agnes Jordan*, that incommunicable inner life which each of us shelters in his own breast. Nor do they yield it up by elaborate speeches or undramatic revelations, but by simple and natural words about simple and natural things. In a syllable, in a glance, life wrests their secret from them and it is ours.

The one act play, *Zu Hause*, showed a mature and finished art. The elder Doergens, a business man of warm feelings, sensitive and really high-minded, has been broken in will and degraded in spirit by the pressure of existence. His wife is mercilessly exacting in her love of pleasure, his younger son spoiled, cynical, ignorant of the very qualities of affection and respect. His youngest child is a hopeless invalid. This little daughter's illness was the last blow to Doergens' soul. We see him come in from a long day of money-making in the cold of a Berlin winter, loaded with bundles, weary in body, sick at heart. But his wife's guests are already there, her creditors

are at the door. She asks for—money. No one has told him that his older son Ludwig is coming home that night; no one has had time. The son comes—a young physician—after a three-years absence and the terrible conditions of that home are gradually unfolded. It is all painful and very unheroic. When Doergens presses the hand of his first-born and tells him that, despite the burden of life, he does not agree with his wife that Ludwig need sink all his ambitions into earning money, he has no better eloquence at his command than you or I. But his tragedy is being enacted in the apartment next to ours or in the house next door. If it be the end of a tragic action to purge the emotions through pity and terror, that end is here achieved.

Die Mütter, which was Hirschfeld's great success on the stage, has none of the hard, irresistible pathos of *Zu Hause*. He has lavished all his strong and beautiful art upon engaging our belief for his central incident. The characters are indisputably alive; the milieu of the Berlin poor in the second act is consummately done. Yet we are not convinced that the working girl, although she was to become a mother, gave back her artist lover to his family without resistance, for his art's sake. Throughout the play there runs an elegiac

note that was new to naturalistic art and that foreshadowed the dominant tone of *Agnes Jordan.*

Until Arnold Bennett and Edward Knoblauch wrote *Milestones* (1912), the structure of *Agnes Jordan* was unique in the history of the modern drama. The happenings of the first act take place in 1865, of the second in 1873, of the third and fourth in 1882, of the fifth in 1896. The purpose of the play is twofold: to embrace and interpret the whole fate of Agnes Jordan herself, and to delineate the changing characteristics of a certain social group in the city of Berlin. The instructed reader or spectator divines without difficulty, despite Hirschfeld's immense reserve and scrupulous objectivity, a noble personal motive behind the second purpose of the play. He desired to show how the Jewish middle class of Berlin (never without its sprinkling of high-minded men and women) had become softened, broadened and refined during the thirty years spanned by his action. To this purpose the peculiar power of the drama is closely allied. The character-work of the naturalists is intense and incomparably convincing. But it is static. The actions of their plays are completed within a few hours, days, or, at most, weeks. Hence these ac-

tions are the results of character as it is, not as it is becoming. Nor is this a surprising fact. For it cannot be often within the reach of any artist to combine that pitch of verisimilitude which naturalism demands with a consistent development of character. Hirschfeld alone, in this single play, has met the utmost stringency of both demands. We see Agnes in the radiant charm of her hopeful youth, in the bitter revolt of her disillusioned womanhood, in the serene freedom of soul which her dedication to duty has given her at last; we see her children as boys and as men, and we doubt no more that this is the same woman, these the same lads, than we would doubt it of the familiar friends of all our years. The irrepressible, impossible Jordan alone, though he loses the power to hurt, does not change. And in that contrast Hirschfeld touches the highest point of his art. For it is the tragedy of the shallow and the self-opinionated that they cannot mellow or soften or rise beyond themselves. Just as Jordan dragged his young wife from Beethoven to hear Meyerbeer, so, in his old age, he splutters to his son, a musician and a disciple of Brahms and Wagner: "Think of the money that fellow Mascagni is making!" I cannot touch upon the wealth of true and harmonious

detail by which these central characters are surrounded. The play, despite its large inclusiveness, is never discursive, never loses its austere unity of action, tone and thought. It is a piece of life—life with its sadness, its sordidness, its evil compulsions, its disillusions, but also with those brave, indomitable dreams, given up by one frustrate generation only to be passed on to the next which, though doomed perhaps to defeat in its turn, will yet not suffer the sacred torch to be extinguished.

V

German literature has sustained no deeper loss in this generation than it did when Otto Erich Hartleben died in 1905 at the early age of forty-one. A master of dramaturgy, the possessor of a style in dialogue no less exact, but more subtle, witty and eloquent than that of the consistent naturalists, he was also a brave and incisive thinker. In this quality, too, he stands in contrast to the naturalist. The latter absorbs life and re-creates it. So soon as he thinks, as Goethe said of Byron, he becomes a child. Now Hartleben's plays are drenched with thought. I had almost called him a German Shaw. But I know very well that Hartleben must have thought

Shaw a prig; I am equally sure that Shaw, could he read Hartleben, would think him a cad. The antinomy is the old but tremendously real one between Hellenism and Hebraism. To Hartleben the life of the senses is a fact and a splendid fact; to Shaw it is a burden that is to be stripped of glamour and romance and solemnly dedicated to eugenic uses. Hartleben sees in it a clean and radiant thing which we have contorted and defiled through moral conventions that are rooted in the lust of power and the greed of gold.

He explains his point of view with great verve and fine precision in his satiric play, *Die Erziehung zur Ehe* (1893). A young man of good family may not marry at the age when love is a clean and instinctive passion, because he cannot yet properly support a wife and children of his own class. Neither, however, will respectable society permit him to have a mistress who is also comrade and friend. The attachment may become too strong and our young man may publicly outrage public morality. So society forces him to abandon such a mistress with brutal abruptness and then damns her for becoming a harlot. To the young man, however, it whispers that harlots are his proper resort until his income entitles him to the spotless respectability

of an appropriate marriage. And thus he comes to marriage at last, worn out in body and corrupted in his emotions but—respectable. Raised to a very much loftier plane, the theme of that most beautiful and moving tragedy *Rosenmontag* (1900) is still the same.

The recognition of this tangle of unclean inconsistencies drove Hartleben into a completely anarchic scepticism on the whole subject of social, and specifically, of sexual morality. "If God made the world," the abandoned girl argues in *Die Erziehung zur Ehe*, "we may surely accept man with the instincts and the nature which God gave him." "But if God did *not* make the world," she goes on, "then I don't see at all how we dare to demand of man that he be other than he is." "But, Meta," the young student exclaims, "that point of view would put an end to all moral judgments!" And with a harsh sincerity the girl replies: "Yes, and that's what ought to be done!"

Hartleben's scepticism went a step farther. From a distrust of social morality he passes to a distrust of man as an organiser of society at all. Hence at the height of the naturalistic movement which is so firmly founded on socialism and social compassion, he alone sounded a note of op-

position in his austerest play, *Hanna Jagert* (1893). What is the use of throwing over one set of compulsions for a newer, cruder, and perhaps, on trial, more galling set? That is the conclusion to which Hanna Jagert is finally brought. She has satisfied her own unborrowed sense of honour and purity and feels a deep liberation from the disgrace of force and conflict. You may bully the individual soul in the name of bourgeois morality; you may bully it in the name of the collective welfare. The individual soul, the free personality, is still the one significant thing in the world and you—are still a bully.

I would guard against conveying the impression that Hartleben's art, like Brieux's or Shaw's, is argumentative. Not so. He shows his aspects of truth in embodiments as objective and as pungently concrete as any naturalist. But his work has intellectual copiousness; it has zest and wit; it has an aroma that is almost heady. Unlike the minor naturalists, Hartleben was not only a dramatist, but also a poet. His work is less grave than theirs, perhaps, in its totality, less solid—even less permanently built. But, for our time, it has extraordinary richness and charm.

The drastic plays of Hartleben seem almost

reactionary beside the cold analysis of Frank Wedekind (b. 1864). The moral ideas of organised society had Hartleben in their grip. That is why he spent his life in the combat expressed by his motto: *In Philistros!* Wedekind betrays no consciousness of the existence of any moral standards or restraints. He simply sets down the partial but penetrating vision of his anarchic soul. The atmosphere of scandal that, for a time, surrounded his name, is quite misleading. His problems are, to be sure, exclusively erotic. But the corrupt mind that goes to him for sensual allurement will be curiously disappointed. This fact was clearly demonstrated in the proceedings brought against Wedekind and his publisher in 1904. The superior court recognised the apparent monstrousness of *Die Büchse der Pandora*, but had the good sense to decide that so unsparing a presentation of vice could harm no one. Of the possible moral effect of his plays Wedekind himself is, I imagine, quite careless. But his nature is dry and his artistic processes, arbitrary as they are, have an indefinable coldness and impersonality.

His first and best play, by which both his fame and his infamy were established, is *Frühlings Erwachen* (1894). And no competent account

of the modern drama can venture to omit this highly remarkable work. Whatever the preceptist critic may urge against subjects fit only for the clinic or the text-book of pathology, the overwhelming fact must give even him pause that modern literature, in all tongues and countries, is driven by the impulse to make its content coextensive with life itself. To deplore this impulse is legitimate; to set oneself against it is futile. The great historical waves of tendency will stop for no man's discomfort. The shores of literature are strewn with the wreckage of critics who, in one form or another, have uttered the cry of Jeffrey on Wordsworth: "This will never do!"

In *Frühlings Erwachen* Wedekind set himself the task of describing and interpreting the sexual difficulties of adolescence. Partly by the force of his own temperament, partly on account of the difficulties of his theme, he abandoned the massive and continuous technique of naturalism. The play consists of a large number of scenes, unrelated as far as external structure goes, but each giving us a swift and sudden insight into the souls and bodies of his characters. These scenes do not, in any ordinary sense, develop a fable; they do succeed, in their totality, in pre-

senting a highly complex condition that manifests itself variously through the medium of various souls. Each scene, moreover, though of a haunting reality of impression, is lifted above the physical crassness of its incidents by a strange remoteness of speech and gesture that clings to all the characters. Thus even the incredibly daring incident in the *Korrektionsanstalt* fills one with compassion rather than with disgust. It is not hard to disengage in fairly exact terms the thoughts to which the shifting scenes of the play correspond: The youth of the race is seized at a certain period by inevitable instincts and passions. Society is so organised, however, and conventions are so fixed, that youth attains no clarity concerning these instincts, but struggles with them in the lurid twilight of ignorance and of phantastic guilt. Thus bodies are corrupted and souls perverted by the mysterious degradation of the race's very condition of continuance. A morbid importance then surrounds the instinct of sex; it penetrates all the recesses of the nature; it becomes unclean; it gives rise to practices that deepen the evil and unnatural sense of guilt. These facts no sane observer of society will deny. In Wedekind's play they are rendered objective

in a manner that will deeply stir the mature mind to compassion and reflection.

An arbitrary and phantastic element which admirably softened the incidents of Wedekind's first play has, unhappily, asserted itself in his later work to the exclusion of saner qualities. His characters have become increasingly eccentric until all recognisable human motives and actions seem often obscured. His most solid and valuable achievement, after *Frühlings Erwachen* is *Erdgeist* (1895) with its sequel *Die Büchse der Pandora* (1904). The protagonist of these pieces is a Nana who never, like Zola's heroine, exceeds the possibilities of her type, although she too symbolises the lure and ruthless cruelty of the flesh. It is possible that the peculiar virtues of some of his more recent plays elude my perception. The man has in him the seeds of a new technique and of a new fashion of dealing with life. And these seeds may, before the merely protesting critic is aware, produce an art which, however repugnant to our immediate tastes, will not permit itself to be neglected.

VI

"For dream and waking with each other blend,
Falsehood and truth, and certainty is not."
Schnitzler's *Paracelsus*.

"De quelque façon que l'on conçoive la vie, et la connût-on pour le rêve d'un rêve, on vit."
Anatole France.

Second to Hauptmann alone in the rank of modern German playwrights and one of the most notable creative artists of our age is the Viennese physician, Arthur Schnitzler (b. 1862). In his work the naturalist's fidelity to truth and his massive simplicity of technique have undergone an exquisite transformation. Schnitzler is master of both. But he has sought to disengage the poetry and the pathos of our lives. He has brooded upon the contents of our experience and cannot find in his heart the stern or even militant accents of the naturalists of the North. The soul of man is a great country (*Das weite Land*, 1910) in which live side by side strange beauty and terror, yearning and desire. Our motives are never unmixed, our actions never single in purpose; good and evil are but coarse names for abstract extremes which reality never approaches. Hence "it is better to give happiness than to be guiltless" (*Der einsame Weg*, 1903). Happi-

ness we must needs desire and our only chance of possessing even its shadow is by yielding to experience, not by refusing it. This does not mean romantic bustle—fighting or sea-faring. "It needs no special display of events or adventures in order to experience something" (*Zwischenspiel*, 1904). But we must not deny ourselves to the illusions of fame, of love, of youth! Of youth pre-eminently, for "so long as one is young, all doors are open, and beyond every door the world begins" (*Der einsame Weg*). Such is the poetry of life. Its pathos lies in the transitoriness of all our illusions, the briefness and precariousness of our truly "living hours," the loneliness of the soul and the imminent shadow of death. In the shimmer of life's dissolving appearances art is an enduring element. "Living hours? They live no longer than the last man who remembers them. It is not the meanest calling to lend such hours a permanence beyond themselves" (*Lebendige Stunden*, 1901).

The thirst for the illusion and the necessity of yielding to it—these are the two notes that Schnitzler is never weary of sounding. "By the way," says a character in *Der einsame Weg*, "I know a man who is eighty-three years old; he has buried two wives, seven children, not to men-

tion grandchildren, and he plays the piano in a shabby little music-hall in the park, while artists of both sexes display on the stage their tights and the flutter of their short skirts. Well, the other day, when the wretched show was over and they were putting out the lanterns, strangely enough he went on, imperturbably, playing on the vile box. And so we invited him, Ronsky and I, to sit down at our table and we began to chat with him. And he told us that the last piece he had played was his own composition. Naturally we complimented him. And then his eyes shone and he asked in his trembling voice: 'Do you believe, gentlemen, that my work will be successful?' He is eighty-three years old, and his career is ending in a little music-hall in the park, and his audience is composed of nurse-girls and corporals and the yearning of his soul is—*their* applause." Thus ends a life that was permitted to spend itself for its proper illusions. What of a life that was denied them? To the old musician Weiring in *Liebelei* (1894) comes a neighbour to console him for the death of his sister, an elderly spinster.

Katharina: But it must be a real consolation to know that you were always the benefactor and protector of a poor dear creature like that—

Weiring: Yes, I used to imagine that too, long ago,

when she was a lovely young girl, and I seemed to myself Heaven knows how clever and noble. But then later when the grey hairs began to come and the wrinkles, and one day passed after another—and with them all her youth—and the girl gradually became—one hardly notices such things, you know—an old spinster, it was only then that I began to feel what I had really done.

Katharina: But Mr. Weiring . . .

Weiring: I see her before me this minute, the way she used to sit opposite me so often, in the evening, in the room there by the lamplight, and look at me with that quiet smile of hers, with that utterly resigned smile—as though she wanted to thank me; and I—I felt as though I had to throw myself at her feet and beg her to forgive me for having guarded her so well from all danger and from all delight.

But there is a sharper tragedy than that—to grasp one's illusions, like the golden leaves in the fairy tale, and find them autumn foliage, sere and wind-blown. That is the deepest experience of all the characters of Schnitzler from *Anatol* (1890) to *Das weite Land* (1910). Love and delight and even sorrow slip from us on our solitary path; we yearn for the reality of enduring spiritual values and are lost amid the impermanence of dreams. And therefore Schnitzler's men and women, even in the pursuit of their dearest illusions, are touched with sadness. Pensively they walk in those Viennese gardens which their

creator loves to delineate—discoursing of love and life and death. The light there is never radiant, the darkness is never sombre; a mild wind stirs the tops of the slender poplars that stand against the fading orange of the evening sky.

This interpretation of the spirit of Schnitzler's work may seem to be incomplete since it does not stress the note of social protest heard in a few of his earlier plays: *Das Märchen* (1891), *Freiwild* (1896) and *Das Vermächtnis* (1897). In sounding that note, however, Schnitzler was impelled primarily by the spirit of a particular decade. And even as it is, the note is softened, almost muffled, and the conclusion of the whole matter is hardly a summons to revolt or even reform, but rather in harmony with that wise sentence which Matthew Arnold loved to quote: "Things are as they are; why then should we strive to be deceived?" In *Das Märchen*, for instance, the problem is that of the girl—in this case a gifted young actress—who has made a mistake of youth and passion. Shall no sweetness of spirit, no power of love, make her the equal of any shallow but unspotted creature? And what about the purity of men? The intellect of Fedor Weill and his sense of justice rebel against so cruel and unequal a convention. But the test

comes, and all that he can see in Fanny's eyes are alien memories, all that he can feel upon her lips are the kisses with which she was unfaithful to him before she knew him. "Things are as they are!" He lets her go from him. "What has been—*is;* therein lies the deep meaning of all past events."

In *Freiwild*, the finest dramatic treatment of the theme of honour—incomparably superior to Sudermann's and Hartleben's plays—and in *Das Vermächtnis*, Schnitzler's mood is more practical, his tone sharper, his attack more definite. But in these two plays he treats conventions and prejudices of a merely social order. Now it is the special praise of his art that it deals, in all its finest examples, not with the laws of society but with the soul of man. His are not Hauptmann's great notes of hunger, love and prayer. Our dreams, our disillusions are his theme; above all, our yearning for harmony and permanence, quenchless and doomed to an eternity of defeat.

All his favourite motives appear in his earliest dramatic work, the group of one-act plays called *Anatol* (1889–1890). In the first play Anatol's mistress rests in hypnotic sleep; he may now ask her whether she loves him and is true to him. He does not ask, for it is by our illusions that

we live. The second play is a miniature tragedy because Gabriele has never had the courage to yield to the supreme illusion of love. And in the third play an exquisite illusion—true as the truth itself but for a stupid coincidence—is broken. Nor is Schnitzler's deeper thought absent from the apparent frivolity of these exquisite sketches. For even the elegant trifler Anatol is, in his way, a seeker for permanence amid the shadows that glide by us. The workmanship was, even in this early effort, in harmony with the spirit of Schnitzler's theme. What lightness and firmness of structure! What exquisite limpidness in the medium of dialogue! What melancholy and caressing grace! It seemed as though the spirit of old Vienna and of Mozart had blended with that of this modern man of science, this fundamentally naturalistic playwright, who never shirks the verisimilitude of honest art, but who can draw from reality a music so subtle, sweet and mournful.

That music grows deeper and graver in *Liebelei*. The play is usually held to be Schnitzler's masterpiece. Its theme is the playing with love that may hide a tragic passion, the gentle comedy of a springtime that may end in terror. The lilacs are fragrant in the play, and from the

high window of Christine's room we feel the winds of spring carrying love and death. But higher than *Liebelei*, and higher than the one-act plays—a form of which Schnitzler is the undisputed master—*Die Gefährtin* (1898) or *Lebendige Stunden* (1901)—I am inclined to rate two of his later dramas: *Der einsame Weg* (1903) and *Der Ruf des Lebens* (1905). To recount the fables of these plays would be quite futile. For the virtue of Schnitzler's art does not reside in the powerful or clever or consistent handling of an action, although he can handle an action in all those ways; it resides in the creation of a spiritual atmosphere which, by its freedom and largeness, interprets not only the lives of his characters but sends out a glow in the light of which we, too, can interpret our experience of soul and sense. This is especially true of *Der einsame Weg*. The people in this play love the illusions by which we live. But all delusions they have put away. Theirs are no ready-made ethical precepts or prejudices by which reality is schematised into a system, and our actions reduced to symbols of mere arbitrary values. These men and women are in touch with the concrete facts of life—the eternally separate and individual impulses and actions which no man can adjudge and

no generalisation reach. To read this beautiful and subtle work aright is a liberal education in the virtue of charity and the art of living. For the deepest and central fact of all our experience is that imperious call of life which all these people, in their various ways, have answered. One may hang back for a space; one may, like the Blue Cuirassiers in *Der Ruf des Lebens*, interpret the call of life as a call of death. But one must yield at last, and in the places whither it summons—there build one's heavens and hells. To refuse the call is more than human—or less. Marie, in *Der Ruf des Lebens*, dwells in a sullen, sultry unreality until she heeds the call. The storm of life, tragic and terrible, whirls her along. It leaves her broken. But having once lived, the wise physician promises her a resurrection of her life some day.

The art of Schnitzler is an extraordinarily ripe and complex product. To communicate a sense of its quality is a matter of the last difficulty. Schnitzler has reflected profoundly, but has despaired of building himself a philosophic or religious vision of the sum of things. Hence he stands beside the stream of reality in an attitude of sad contemplation, striving to disengage from that various and endless flow of appearances

such moods and forms as hold at least a shadowy prophecy of the direction in which the stream is tending. He knows that that direction, whatever it be, is changeless, and that the current will sweep away our protests like windlestraws. To yield ourselves to it is our only wisdom and our only hope, yet not to yield blindly or to abandon that yearning for permanence which, be it a last illusion or not, is our most human and our most tragic gift.

VII

Productivity in the field of the German as of the French drama during the past twenty-five years has been astonishing. Hence, in dealing with it, as in dealing with the drama in France, I have had to impose fairly rigid limits upon the extent of my survey. In order to observe these limits it has been necessary to omit names and works which the narrow specialist may expect to find. Thus I have not discussed Hermann Bahr (b. 1863), the versatile friend and enemy, in creative work and criticism, of many movements, but a master in the mood of none. For very different reasons I have omitted the striking and popular art of Adam Beyerlein (b. 1871), and for different reasons again, the powerful and

manly work of the Tyrolese, Karl Schoenherr. But my survey includes, I believe, every contributor to the naturalistic drama whose work has reached with any degree of certainty, a promise of lasting value and significance.

That naturalistic drama of Germany to which I attribute qualities of so high an order, has attained those qualities by turning its vision not upon man as he ought to be, but as he is. It has not shaped its characters or fables according to anterior laws, conventions or decrees; nor has it forced its material into those moral categories by which we seek to rationalise the life of man, even as by another series of categories we seek to rationalise the life of nature. Nor yet has the naturalistic drama of Germany, like the naturalistic novel of France, merely narrated that concrete, that free, that boundless reality, but has brought it immediately home to our eyes, our ears, our hearts. The merely popular and the almost equally shallow pseudo-idealistic protest that such art is depressing need not disturb one's estimate of this drama at all. Such *is* the life of man. If we cannot wring a bracing philosophy or a far-reaching hope from it, we shall, at least, not be deceived. But nothing, as a matter of fact, is so impressive or so heartening as the number of

souls, created without didactic consciousness or premeditation by the German naturalists, who under the tyranny of hunger, of passion, of despair, still toil and battle for some ideal value: for beauty, for justice, for liberty, for inner freedom, for truth—the souls whom Hauptmann has described so well in *Henry of Auë:*

> "For they who strive are they who live albeit
> Erring. Tireless to strive is still to be
> Upon a goodly road."

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RENAISSANCE OF THE ENGLISH DRAMA

I

The decline of the English drama in the nineteenth century has long been a commonplace of criticism. Scarcely less obvious, at least to-day, are the two causes of that decline: the loss of a national sense for the theatre as a fine art, and the crushing weight of the Shakespearean tradition. The English antipathy to the theatre, however, strikes its roots deeply into the nation's historical past; it goes back to Stephen Gosson's *School of Abuse* (1579) and to Jeremy Collier's *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1699) which, a century later, drew from the ageing Dryden so touching an admission and so modest a defence. The last school of native English drama, moreover, even to its latest exemplars in Sheridan, served but to deepen and harden that antipathy. The artificial comedy that flourished after the Restoration, whether derived from the French stage, or but a

new and brilliant continuation of the English comedy of humours, was written by the members of a small and artificial society for its own amusement. It could not but complete the alienation of the great body of the English people from the art of the drama. That people was meanwhile, all during the eighteenth century, hardening in the moulds of mutually repellent classes and mutually exclusive forms of dissent, until the possibility of an homogeneous audience—the first condition of a national theatre—was definitely lost. The dramatist could make his appeal neither to a social consciousness as in France, nor to an ethnic consciousness as in Germany. The situation was memorably summed up by Matthew Arnold in 1879: "In England we have no modern drama at all. Our vast society is not homogeneous enough, not sufficiently united, even any large portion of it, in a common view of life, a common ideal capable as serving as basis for a modern English drama."

Theatres continued to exist and plays to be produced. But the national alienation from the drama as an art affected the few who went to the theatre as profoundly as the many who stayed away. For the drama was felt to be part of the ungodly life at the worst, of the merely frivolous

life at best. The intellectual classes had, as Shaw puts it, become thoroughly accustomed to do without the theatre; to the middle classes it represented an occasional excursion into a slightly improper or even degrading sphere. What demands would such an audience make? What standards would it be conscious of? The drama that still threatens at times the very existence of the English-speaking stage is the result—the drama that flatters the unintelligent prejudices of the crowd but allures its senses. In a word, Pinero's *The "Mind the Paint" Girl* (1912), uniting a vast display of finery, white shoulders and silk stockings with emphasis upon a moral attitude of inconceivable unveracity and sloth.

During a great part of the nineteenth century, however, the supply of even such plays was wanting in England. The eminent masters of the period expressed themselves through the novel which, with a notable tradition behind it, had attained the freedom and dignity of a great art. Meanwhile the well-made Parisian play was translated and adapted by many nameless purveyors to the stage as well as by Robertson, Gilbert, Taylor and Charles Reade. So much a matter of course had this process become that the revivers of the English drama found it necessary,

on play-bills and elsewhere, to point out the fact that their plays were "original," not adapted. Thus while France produced the solid social observation, the flexibility of moral outlook that underlie the artifice of Augier and Dumas *fils;* while in Germany successive masterpieces (Hebbel's *Maria Magdalena*, 1843, Ludwig's *Der Erbförster*, 1850) upheld the realistic tradition of Lessing's maturity and of Schiller's youth, England—easily first in poetry and prose fiction—had nothing to show but the terrible melodramas of the elder Lytton. (*Lady of Lyons*, 1834; *Money*, 1840).

How utterly devoid of standards that demand either reality or moral insight on the stage the English audience had become, is illustrated by the success accorded several of the comedies, notably *Caste* (1867) of Thomas William Robertson (1829–1871). The social and moral outlook of *Caste* summed up in the sentence: "What brains can break through, love may leap over," is one which every sensible observer of human nature knows to be violently untrue. That untruth has been exposed with the quietest power, the serenest certainty, by Mr. Galsworthy in *The Eldest Son* (1909). But in 1867 Robertson's play was heralded as an attempt to bring the drama back to

the life of its own day. "The whole secret of its success is truth," wrote a contemporary critic. And so confused are, to this day, the critical standards of the English drama that Robertson's impossible sentimentalities are still assigned at times an absolute rather than a merely historical importance.

In this condition of the theatre—a theatre without truth, without art, wholly divorced from the consciousness of the nation—it was but natural that the greater spirits of the Georgian and Victorian periods were thrown entirely upon the tradition of Shakespeare. Here was a drama that had its standards and its technique. It was a forlorn hope and an archaic artifice when considered with reference to any real theatre. But it produced a series of splendid if unplayable masterpieces from Shelley's *Cenci* (1819) to Swinburne's *Mary Stuart* (1881). At the same time it did incalculable harm. It became an idol of the tribe. Anything that had the Elizabethan semblance was revered, and so brilliant and incorruptible a critic as Hazlitt, pronounced Sheridan Knowles "the first tragic poet of the age." Nor was this all. The contemporary stage was despised, not because it was bad, but because it was contemporary; the delusion was fostered that men of the

nineteenth century could express themselves through the art of the seventeenth. Thus originated and thus grew that worship of Shakespeare, not as a poet and seer, but as a dramatic technician, which still, upon the lips of the learned and the guileless menaces the reborn drama of the English race.

The condition of the English theatre immediately before the rise of the contemporary movement is admirably illustrated by the efforts which Tennyson made to add the stage to his other conquests. His historical plays are written wholly in the Shakespearean tradition. Of these *Becket* (1884) is probably the best. Constant elaborate changes of scene within the act unfit the play for the modern stage; verse alternates with prose for no reason but that it is so in Shakespeare: the verse is Tennyson disguising his voice; the prose, especially in the speeches of Walter Map, is pseudo-Shakespearean in rhythm and in richness of fancy, as clever and as useless as a copy of Latin verses by a gifted under-graduate. But the poverty of the age's drama appeared even more strikingly when Tennyson attempted, in *The Promise of May* (1882) a play of contemporary rustic life. What fable did this great poet select, this poet who had so wisely and nobly ex-

pressed the philosophical movements of his age, and who for seventy years had lived observantly at the centre of national life? A young country girl makes a mistake. She feels that she must leave her home. Her aged father is at once stricken blind. The base seducer is a free-thinker, an impossible creature of straw and bran. At the end of five years of a spotless life the girl comes home—to die! Why? The poor girl's brief happiness did not even have the consequence that, in a base and intolerant environment, would have made life hard. In brief, the greatest English artist of his day lost all sense of reality, of justice, of anything except conventional verbiage and parochial clap-trap at the mere touch of the contemporary stage. One cannot but be grateful that less than ten years were to elapse before the coming of a dramatist who, whatever one's final estimate of him, cleared this murky and musty, this cruel, stupid, and unreal atmosphere by the simple and splendid fact that he "had no taste for what is called popular art, no respect for popular morality, no belief in popular religion, no admiration for popular heroics."

Gradually, however, the English drama was forced into activity if the theatre was to survive at all. During the eighteen hundred and eighties

the store of "well-made" French plays was exhausted, and no new ones were forthcoming. In 1882 appeared Becque's *Les Corbeaux;* in 1885 his *Parisienne;* in 1887 Antoine opened the *Théâtre Libre;* the French drama became a great art in touch with the intimate realities of its age and place, and could no longer be transported across the Channel. And it was then that appeared the two well-known dramatists of the transition period of the modern English stage: Henry Arthur Jones and Arthur Wing Pinero.

Almost simultaneously the artistic and intellectual isolation of the English drama was broken. Ibsen's *A Doll's House* was produced by Miss Janet Achurch in 1889, and 1891 saw the opening of the *Independent Theatre* with *Ghosts.* It was upon the boards of this theatre that Bernard Shaw opened his career as a dramatist in 1892 with *Widowers' Houses.* There followed more than a decade of turmoil and polemics. A group of excellent critics, headed by Mr. William Archer, fought brilliantly and learnedly that battle for the modern drama in English which is not yet wholly won. On the side of creative work, however, many hopes have been realised. For the first five years of the twentieth century saw the beginnings of the incisive and subtle dramatic

work of Mr. Granville Barker and, in the person of Mr. John Galsworthy, at last gave England a modern dramatist of the rank, if not of the stature, of Ibsen and Hauptmann.

II

I have called Jones and Pinero the dramatists of a transitional period and a transitional method. The necessity for this distinction has never been sufficiently recognised, for the unintelligent absence of any exact critical perceptions still clings to the discussions and the study of the English drama. We are not guilty of so grave a confusion of values in any other art. We are very sensitively aware of the difference between the art of Wilkie Collins and the art of Mr. Thomas Hardy. It is quite possible for intelligent people to read *The Woman in White* with a certain avidity; it is not possible for them to confuse the quality or permanence of that pleasure with the quality and the permanence of pleasure given them by the Wessex novels. Nor, to take an example nearer home, will they let themselves be put off with *The Firing Line* in place of *The Custom of the Country;* with *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage-Patch* in place of *Sister Carrie.* In the drama that discrimination is still to seek. And yet the

only hope for the drama in English lies in the gradual cultivation, in British and American audiences, of that instinctive perception by which the play-goers of Berlin and Paris differentiate at once between Lindau and Hauptmann or between Sardou and Hervieu. Until we come to understand with the utmost delicacy and thoroughness the chasm that divides the work of Henry Arthur Jones from the work of John Galsworthy we shall continue to witness the disheartening spectacle of epoch-making runs for the decorative sentimentalities of David Belasco, while a play like Miss Sowerby's *Rutherford and Son* (1913) scarcely maintains itself for three weeks in the smallest of metropolitan theatres.

I hasten, even at the risk of quite abandoning the tone of history for that of polemics, to answer an objection that is constantly made to the establishment of rigid standards in the art of the theatre. The drama, it is said, is a popular art; the great playwrights of the past—Sophocles, Shakespeare, Molière—were the popular playwrights of their own day. This is historically true. And it continues true. It cannot, indeed, be said that Hauptmann, Hervieu, and Schnitzler are absolutely the most popular dramatists of con-

temporary Germany, France and Austria. The vast complexity of modern life forbids any such absolute popular pre-eminence. But it is a fact that these dramatists, like the Molières and Shakespeares of the past, have reached the audiences of their time and country widely and permanently, and can show the modern evidence of that success in wealth and power and prestige. To reverse this test, however, and apply it to English and American conditions, is to reduce it to the absurd. It is useless to waste time over a critical test that would assign any place in the history of the drama to Charles Klein or rob John Galsworthy of any share of his eminence by reason of his limited success upon the stage. The explanation of the apparent paradox of this state of affairs is to be found in that historical alienation of the English audience from the theatre, of which I have spoken, and of the consequent loss of all standards touching the drama as a fine art. The audiences of Paris, of Vienna, of Weimar, have a secular tradition and training in regard to the theatre; the heterogeneous audiences of London and New York have none. Hence I am sorry to see several of our American universities striving to turn out dramatists who shall be able to grapple with the degrading conditions which

popular success demands to-day. Does not the truer function of our academic dealing with the drama lie in the formation of an audience which, by its homogeneous spiritual culture, by its fine sense of values, will help to banish the scenic display and the melodrama to their proper place, and give the Galsworthys of the present and the future that hearing which Scandinavia and Germany, Austria and France, have given to the great playwrights of their modern theatre?

The difference—for there is a difference—between Mr. Henry Arthur Jones (b. 1851) and such a man as Paul Lindau consists in this: that Mr. Jones has a definite historical position in the development of the modern English drama. What his position is he has himself unconsciously defined in that very curious and instructive book *The Renascence of the English Drama* (1895). "The dramatic critics," Mr. Jones wrote, "who have advocated realistic principles have often by their admiration of mean, perverse things, been antagonistic to the permanent advance of the English drama. . . . But the epitaph—it is already written—on all this realistic business will be—'It does not matter what happens in kitchen middens.'" To such realism Mr. Jones opposes a drama that is to have "beauty, mystery, passion,

imagination." A very few years before, however, Mr. Jones had written as follows: "The fever and hurry of modern London life . . . have tended to spread abroad the strangely false idea that the one end of the theatre is—not to show us our lives—but to take us out of them! . . . Its complete acceptance by authors and public is the grave of the drama." These two utterances clearly betray a man who is under the traditional spell of that pseudo-idealism which has never, as a matter of fact, beheld the blinding face of either beauty or mystery but who, on the other hand, has had occasional perceptions of the fact that the development of the modern drama has been and must, on one whole side of its activity, continue to be in the direction of naturalism. The case of Mr. Jones is slightly complicated by the fact that he imagines himself a mighty radical. No doubt he has delivered some rough and ready blows at very primitive forms of human stupidity, as in *The Triumph of the Philistines* (1895). As an artist, however, he is pathetically under the spell of every romantic folly, of any sentimental delusion.

It is possible to test Mr. Jones' qualities as a playwright and observer by a brief analysis of two of his best-known plays: *The Case of Rebel-*

lious Susan (1895) and *Michael and His Lost Angel* (1896).

Lady Susan Harabin, having discovered her husband's infidelity, refuses to be soothed or placated. She feels that the ordinary facile forgiveness of such wrongs will not meet her case. Despite the protestations of her aunt, and of an uncle, Sir Richard Kato, who plays providence throughout the action, she leaves her home. Ten months have elapsed at the opening of the second act. During that period Lady Susan has had an affair of the heart with Lucien Edensor, though she did not, in all likelihood, go to the length of her original threat of vengeance in kind. She plans to elope with Lucien but is persuaded by Sir Richard to desist and to come to him. Before the beginning of the third act fifteen more months have gone by. Lady Sue now learns that Lucien's lifelong sorrow for her loss lasted just three weeks, and she returns to Harabin whose regret over her desertion seems to have been largely caused by the trouble and expense that loose women inflicted on him during his temporary widowerhood. Now, wherein lies the "case" of Susan, and what does her "rebellion" come to? Does she believe that infidelity dissolves the marriage bond? Or that it gives the woman an equal right? Or that it

is tragic? Or that, in the end, it doesn't matter? Does she return to her husband from a sense of duty, or because she loves him, or merely because she has had a sentimental disappointment? The feebleness of the central idea is only surpassed by the incurable externality of the characters and the groaning mechanism of the structure. The long intervals of time between the acts rob these episodes of any concentrated effect; the decisive action is always brought about by the sermonising and wire-pulling of Sir Richard Kato; if the play threatens, at any moment, to attain a shadow of unity or vigour—in prance two comic paper caricatures named Pybus and Elaine to convulse the latter-day groundlings with their sorry tricks. If they cannot be dragged in, we are treated to an Admiral of the British Navy who has excellent possibilities as a character type but who must needs be degraded into a drunken buffoon. The difference between such a play and one by Galsworthy is the difference between a mechanical toy and a living organism.

Such is the realism of Jones. I come now to his "beauty, mystery, passion, imagination."

Michael Feversham, an austere Anglican priest, forces the daughter of his secretary, who has sinned, into public confession and penitence. At

this time appears in his parish Mrs. Audrie Lesden, half angel, half demon, who tempts Michael by tempting him to save her. Four months pass. Michael is in his desolate hermitage on St. Decumen's Island to watch and pray. Audrie manages to be left on the island. A message goes wrong; no boat can come that night; Michael and Audrie fall into sin. But her husband, of whose existence Michael was ignorant, appears. They part. A year passes. Michael has restored the ancient minister in his parish. But he cannot strangle "the snake of his sin" and on the day of the consecration of the minister confesses that sin to his people and leaves them. Ten months pass. Michael is in a convent in Italy, about to be received into the Roman communion. He cannot find peace without Audrie. He is told of her illness. "She's dying!" he exclaims, and Audrie walks in with the remark: "I'm afraid I am." And proceeds to do so.

That is, quite objectively put, the fable of the play. The dialogue is written in this fashion: "I was wondering what memories are stored in that white forehead." "Oh, it's cruel to dash the cup from my lips!" In Michael's monologues Mr. Jones reaches heights of this quality that would put Miss Braddon on her mettle. But

truly appalling is the sentimental glue into which are steeped, in the first and last acts, the silent and solemn mysteries of motherhood and death. It is hard to understand how any audience not wholly devoid of spiritual tone could ever have endured this unmanly desecration of our last sanctities. It is common enough, to be sure. I have a vision of Audrie Lesden, exquisitely gowned, dying to the sweet, sweet strains of soft music on the boards of the old Fourteenth Street Theatre in New York, and of gum-chewing shop-girls dissolved in the comfort of their tears. But *Michael and His Lost Angel* is taken seriously as the work of a serious playwright. Great wits praised it when it appeared—Mr. Archer and Mr. Shaw; American university professors interpret it in their lecture halls.

I can find nothing in Mr. Jones' later plays to mitigate the harshness of this judgment. His ideas are feeble, his structure is mechanical, his dialogue is insincere. His characters never, in any deep and intimate sense, speak to each other, but always at the audience. His popularity is inevitable; his serious fame is a menace to the English drama.

Sir Arthur Wing Pinero (b. 1855), the second

figure in the transitional phase of the modern drama in England, has shown a far higher degree of flexibility as an artist than Mr. Jones. I venture to call in question a corresponding inner development. For though he has written many apparently serious plays since his Court Theatre farces and *The Profligate* (1889), his career, for the moment, culminates in *The "Mind the Paint" Girl* (1912).

His very early plays are harmless and negligible: *The Magistrate* (1885) is amusing enough; *Sweet Lavender* (1888) is a sentimental hodge-podge in which the poor working-girl turns out to be the rich man's daughter. One would not dream of discussing work of this quality in any art except the art of the English drama. No history of English literature is likely to discuss the novels of "The Duchess." But Mr. John Hare's production of *The Profligate* (1889) at the New Garrick Theatre with Mr. Forbes Robertson in the title rôle has been said to mark an epoch in the history of the modern drama. *The Profligate*, however, is really a more lamentable because a more pretentious play than the early farces and melodramas. It is the old-fashioned story of betrayal with all its false and foolish moral arrogance, with the phantastic insistence on sex in-

stinct as the exclusive property of one sex and as being, in that sex, a monstrous perversity which slays its shuddering and unwilling victims. The technique of the play represents the long arm of coincidence as the arm of a skilled prestidigitator. It must be an extraordinarily primitive audience that is taken in by the various reappearances of Janet Preece and the discovery of the real culprit in the third act.

At the end of four years, however, years marked by the introduction of Ibsen into England, by the founding of the *Independent Theatre* and by the appearance of Mr. Shaw, Pinero produced *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*. The absolute value of that play is, clearly, not of the highest. The catastrophe which inheres so closely in the characters is brought about by an unlikely and violent coincidence. And that coincidence is effected because Pinero had not the fine artistic courage to leave Aubrey and Paula Tanqueray merely with a recognition of their real tragedy—the irrevocableness of the past. But intellectually *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* is in a different world from that of *The Profligate*. The outlook upon life is true and fearless within the given limits of merely social morality; a free and

human justice is dealt out in the characterisation of Paula Tanqueray herself.

The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith (1894) though less effective as a whole marks a still further advance in artistic and intellectual sincerity. The situation of that deadly compromise which Lucas Cleeve hesitates to reject, and which would have reduced Agnes Ebbsmith from a free personality in a free union to a common wanton—that situation is finely conceived and embodied without cheap concessions to the mechanism of intrigue. Equally sound is the plea of Sybil Cleeve in the last act and her immediate repudiation of its disgrace. Indeed Pinero's progress in the projection of character was very notable during these years and approved itself especially in the relations between John and Olive Allingham in his next play: *The Benefit of the Doubt* (1895). It is unfortunate that the whole action of this interesting work hinges upon a conversation overheard through an elaborate bit of technical trickery.

The level of these three plays Pinero was unable to sustain. By perceptible gradations from play to play he sank once more to the shoddy and external intrigue of *The Gay Lord Quex* (1899).

Then, gathering his powers with an almost visible effort, he produced his most elaborate and ambitious drama in *Iris* (1901). The merits of that piece are solid and obvious. Iris, as a character, is incontestably alive and permanent; the portrait of Maldonado is earnestly attempted and vividly elaborated; the last interview between Lawrence Trenwith and Iris is not without true pathos; the ending is, for once, unafraid of its own inherent necessities. But the base of all this excellent structure is built on stubble. For the drama is that art in which men shall go through the recognisable gestures of their mortal fate driven by an inner impulse, not by the tug and thrust of the deviser's clever mechanism. Now the action of *Iris* is wholly conditioned on two external accidents and one piece of shameless trickery. The impetus that starts the play is the unusual will left by Iris' husband; the turning point of the action comes fortuitously from without, through the absconding of Archibald Kane; to force the catastrophe Iris must write a letter, tear it up, scatter the fragments on the floor, and fail to observe Maldonado gather them in her very presence. Thus only does he learn of her apparent treachery and returns to drive her out into the streets.

Iris was again followed by a rapid decline in

Pinero's work. In 1904 appeared *Letty*, mawkish, melodramatic and unreal; in 1905 *A Wife Without a Smile* which is farce at its most trivial. But the best quality in Pinero is his ever resurgent ambition which wrung from him a new group of serious attempts at the art and not at the trade of the drama. He reaches his highest point in *The Thunderbolt* (1909). It is still, to be sure, the old Pinero. The action of the play is still based on the destruction of a will. But at last the exposition in the excellent first act is of character rather than of incident, the several members of the Mortimore family are not only well observed but projected without caricature; the confession of James Mortimore in the closing act is a dramatic solution for once conditioned in the uncontorted nature of men and things.

But is this the real Pinero? Or is it the creator of Lavender, of Letty, of Lily Parradell in *The "Mind the Paint" Girl* (1912)? Is it possible to take quite seriously the analysis of Paula Tanqueray, the defence of Agnes Ebbsmith, the judgment upon Iris Bellamy, since Pinero returns unceasingly to a flattery of the coarsest delusions and the most worthless tastes? No one doubts that there are decent girls in the chorus, girls with their own proper notions of honesty and

self-respect. But is it not pandering to the vainest of romantic follies to base a play upon the promise of married happiness between a high-minded and sensitive gentleman and a girl whose social instincts would have driven him to desperation, the very thought of whose mother would have driven him to drink? I can but point once more to Mr. Galsworthy's treatment of the same theme in *The Eldest Son* (1909). Before the plain nobility of truth Pinero's devices shrink aside and lie prone with the other lumber of the green-room and the property man.

In reality it is not difficult to sum up Pinero's character as a dramatic artist. His is a conventional mind under the impact of a world in the throes of moral protest and readjustment; his, a conventional technique under the impact of a nobler and a plainer art. In the direction of that finer art his progress has been less than moderate. With the intellectual dilemma he has dealt by pleading for certain exemptions from the full rigour of the social law. Except in *Iris* he has always treated the problem of sex as one of social, rather than of personal reality and conflict. In that emphasis upon the external social order his art is akin to the art of the French stage, but he lacks

the latter's passion, its keen intelligence, its conviction and its style. The extraordinarily high position which he holds in the world of the English drama is sure to decline rapidly with the introduction of such critical standards as are unhesitatingly applied in every other department of imaginative literature.

III

A brief and curious interlude in the history of the modern English drama is furnished by the comedies of Oscar Wilde (1856–1900). Structurally these comedies are frankly of the old, trivial, intriguing kind. Yet there is a very vital difference between *The Profligate* on the one hand, and *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1893) on the other. Pinero appeals to our sense of moral sincerity and our sense of truth only to insult them; his dialogue apes the speech of man and is but the verbiage of a degraded stage. In a word, *The Profligate* is supposed to be a picture of life. *Lady Windermere's Fan* makes no such pretensions. The play seeks neither to compete with life nor, in any close sense, to interpret it. To assail the comedy of Wilde for a want of reality were like taking a tuberose to task for not being an oak-

tree. The pleasure which the flower gives is brief and a trifle enervating, but it is genuine of its kind.[1]

Wilde succeeds in lifting his comedies out of life—not, to be sure, above it—by the style of his dialogue. The noblest dramatic dialogue is that which creates the illusion of human speech; the basest that which pretends to create such an illusion and gives us the sentimental formulas of melodrama. Wilde neither succeeds nor fails upon such terms. His dialogue, like Congreve's, is an exercise in style. And for such an exercise he was admirably fitted by gifts and training. He has the icy glitter of sheer wit, the sparkling perfection of phrase, the ringing balance of rhythm. Nor is this all. He has moments of a larger and more subtly modulated eloquence. Assuredly the plea of Mrs. Arbuthnot in the last act of *A Woman of No Importance* (1893) is artificial, and so is Goring's reproof of Lady Chiltern in *An Ideal Husband* (1895). But the artifice is the legitimate artifice of fine oratory—calculated, of course, and consciously effective, but with a glow of real conviction, a throb of true

[1] This is, of course, but the old plea of Charles Lamb for the comedy of the Restoration. Wilde, I think, may legitimately claim it for himself.

feeling under the external flash and ring of its periods.

I have called the brilliant comedy of Wilde an interlude in the history of the modern English drama. It is also a prelude to the greater comedy of Mr. Shaw. For the popular impression that Wilde's wit is merely affected nonsense is the result of apocryphal anecdote, and of Mr. Hichen's dazzling satire *The Green Carnation* (1895). Mr. Shaw, I take it, would not repudiate, as at least prophetic, the sayings of Lord Illingworth in *A Woman of No Importance:* "Women represent the triumph of matter over mind." "The history of woman is the history of the worst form of tyranny the world has ever known—the tyranny of the weak over the strong." In *An Ideal Husband*, moreover, Wilde practises a subjective type of stage-direction which is Shavian or nothing. "They are types of exquisite fragility. Watteau would have loved to paint them." Sir Robert Chiltern "is not popular. Few personalities are." And is not Phipps the butler an adumbration, at least, of that remarkable class of serving-men to which belong Balmy Walters and the redoubtable Enry Straker?

Wilde's four comedies are of very unequal value. *Lady Windermere's Fan* is saved from melodrama and triviality only by the artistic distinction of its style. *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) is mere farce, though of an airy and not quite graceless kind. *A Woman of No Importance* would be almost as purely a conversation as Shaw's *Getting Married*, could one snap off the brief climax of each act. His best play is *An Ideal Husband*. A just and powerful idea is justly and powerfully developed. The small Chinese puzzle of intrigue in the second act is carried off by the unfailing brilliancy and vigour of the dialogue. It is an artificial comedy touched with reflection and imagination. In its necessarily almost obsolete kind it is a minor but authentic masterpiece.

IV

Mr. George Bernard Shaw (b. 1856) is a writer of comedy with a tragic cry in his soul. In the Middle Ages he would have been a great saint, appalled at the gracelessness of men's hearts, militant for the kingdom of God. To-day he is a playwright, appalled at the muddleheadedness of the race, a fighter for the conquest of reason over unreason, of order over disorder, of economy

over waste. His mind abhors the frantic contradictions at the root of things; it cries out like a hurt animal over the blind mysticisms by which we are swayed. Many reformers have attacked opinions, institutions, laws. Mr. Shaw attacks the emotional basis on which Western civilisation is founded. In his moments of mere eccentricity he may jeer at science. But he is himself the last inevitable corollary of the scientific spirit. And the fact that, holding the views which he does, he has not been silenced as a madman, stamps him as a portent.

I have already mentioned his moments of mere eccentricity. They occur in states of wild, intellectual exuberance when he applies his method with fierce and joyful indiscriminateness. But let no

> "comfortable moles whom what they do
> Teaches the limits of the just and true,"

flatter themselves that Bernard Shaw is a jester. His theories and his rebellions may rise up, tomorrow, in living form, and obliterate those who had doubted his fierce earnestness.

As becomes a child of the scientific spirit, Shaw is a naturalist; he wants the truth. Only he does not see his truth in the garbs which historical

civilisation has thrown over us. He wants man naked, stripped of his false pretensions, his dignified gestures, his romantic illusions. He wants to know how the stark soul looks when it ceases to mutter its tribal incantations. Hell, in the Shavian gospel, is the home of sham. In Heaven the austere nakedness of truth is vigilant.

Hence his method of attacking things is not to show them, but to show them up; not to describe them, but to tell the truth about them—the merciless, devastating truth. And he has undertaken to tell the truth primarily about three things: Poverty, war and love.

His attacks on poverty and war are his rights as a confirmed modern, a socialist, and hence—though he may repudiate so old-fashioned a term—a utilitarian. For poverty is, in very truth, the root of all evil in that it makes men slaves. It is only an occasional Mrs. Warren who can even appear to rise from that abyss. The vast majority of human creatures are simply stamped, face downward, into the mire. Nor is that slavery one to a wiser power, a more luminous purpose, but quite starkly to hunger, cold and dirt. Hence until society has conquered the sin and the disgrace of poverty, all other efforts and ideals of a collective character are futile. His

attack on war is less interesting and vital. For the glamour of war seemed to him to be becoming daily less real to our civilisation as a whole. To exhibit the typical romance of war, he went to a fairly primitive people living amid fairly primitive conditions. (*Arms and The Man.*) His theory has been invalidated by the sternest of arguments.

There remains his heroic onslaught upon the sex morality of Christendom. That onslaught may be formulated somewhat as follows: The theory of your society is that marriage is sacred, that it ought to be permanent, and that it is the necessary expiation of every offence against the ideal virtue of chastity. The impulse of sex is, as a matter of hard fact, transitory in its nature and impersonal. Its occurrence between two human beings is no ground for supposing that their permanent union will fulfil any of the nobler purposes of human life. Hence by making divorce difficult and indecent you condemn great numbers of men and women to a corroding and corrupting slavery; by inculcating the false notion that the transient impulse of passion must be paid for by a lifetime of responsibility, you force into existence, historically and actually, the trade of prostitution with all its attendant evils of deg-

radation and disease. Finally, by branding extra-marital motherhood with shame you deprive many women of the right to motherhood and, once more, pander to prostitution by driving men into the arms of women whose trade forbids the bearing of children. For it is a psychological fact that the more highly organised a man is, the more does he dread the deflection of his energies from ideal to merely procreative and domestic ends; the more thoroughly a woman is endowed with the passion of motherhood, the less is her continuous need of the conventional husband. In so far as that need is, at present, an economic one, it is disgraceful both to the individual and to society, since it means the repudiation of the social value of that function on which the very existence of the race depends.

Freedom, flexibility and health in the relations of the sexes—these are the ideals that Shaw has most at heart. These are the theme of his central work *Man and Superman* (1903), of *Getting Married* (1908), and, explicitly or implicitly, of passages and episodes in nearly all his plays. Now Shaw, I must repeat, is a utilitarian. He has a scorching "contempt for belles-lettres," for art that is not didactic, above all, for happiness. Like all utilitarians he repudiates a multi-

plicity of final values. It is not enough for him that a thing is good; it must be good—for something else. And it is Shaw's conception that a new order of relationship between the sexes will breed a nobler race—that race of supermen, namely, which will repair the miserable failures of our democracy, which will stamp out the crimes of war and poverty, the disgraces of slavery and disease. To this end has the Life Force been in travail thus far in vain. But the Life Force (which reminds one not a little of Spencer's Absolute that wells up in consciousness) is at last becoming purposeful and self-directing in the brain of philosophic man. Thus man (and here we touch the Pragmatists and the Bergsonians) helps to build up a universe whose incessant aspiration is "to higher organisation, wider, deeper, intenser self-consciousness, and clearer self-understanding."

The trouble with this metaphysic is that it suits only a world of Shavians to whom "the true joy of life" is "the being used for a purpose recognised by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap-heap; the being a force of nature." Need I say that that ideal has its own valour and nobility? But we cannot all be social reformers or

martyrs to moral passion. To many of us the development of a free personality in a free universe will always seem the only ideal that can make life worth living. We must be able to believe that our efforts in art and thought have a measure, at least, of final validity, and our free personalities an enduring relation to something in which "there is no variableness neither shadow of turning." With a burning recognition of human suffering and injustice we refuse to be earthly socialists because we dare not be cosmic socialists.

But indeed I suspect Mr. Shaw himself of a splendid defection. He pleads with too personal a passion for the sexual liberation of mankind. He knows with too intense a knowledge that "of all human struggles there is none so treacherous and remorseless as the struggle between the artist man and the mother woman. Which shall use up the other? That is the issue between them." And he is himself that artist man, attributing to the efforts of his creative thought a spiritual import which transcends the ideals of the collectivist reformer and allies him to that company of free personalities—heroes in the Carlylian sense—

"Whose having lived gives meaning to all life."

I seem scarcely, so far, to have been discussing a dramatist at all. But he must be a poor creature indeed who is not stirred by the luminous sagacity, the daring thought, the intellectual passion of Bernard Shaw. It is not necessary to agree with him at any point. Or, it is possible, as in my own case, to agree with him in a hundred details most heartily and not at all in his ultimate conclusions or his final aims. It is possible, in a word, to do anything but ignore him.

What must be abundantly clear is that the methods of so valorous a thinker cannot be cheap or conventional. With intrigue, with the bluster of external action, he has nothing to do. He is bent upon a much graver business. The structure of his plays, as a matter of fact, corresponds to the development of thoughts; thoughts are dramatised; the evolution of his plays is purely intellectual. This does not mean that he has not, at will, a sufficiently firm grasp of the material world, or that he shirks, in his best plays, the concrete external factors of human life. In that respect, likewise, he is a naturalist to the backbone.

Not so, however, in his dialogue. That is always Shavian, even when the speech of his char-

acters is scrupulously naturalistic in its merely formal aspect. The style is always the same—the bare, sinewy, rapid, but undeviatingly prosaic eloquence of Bernard Shaw. It has light but no heat, and the light is always sharp and challenging, never radiant or lustrous.

And this unflagging energy of style brings me at last to the people who are supposed to use it—the characters of Bernard Shaw. Into that astonishing assemblage have stolen a few ordinary mortals: Candida's father, Crampton, in *You Never Can Tell;* Roebuck Ramsden in *Man and Superman;* the General in *Getting Married.* The rest, even the humblest, such as Bill Walker in *Major Barbara*, or Blanco Posnet in the play that shows him up, have the extraordinary capacity of getting outside of their own skins. I am aware of the crudeness of my image. But Shaw wants no "moral attitudes," he wants truth; he wants "actual humanity instead of doctrinaire romanticism." Men and women, however, live and move and have their being in these moral attitudes; their psychical life is drenched in this doctrinaire romanticism. By being shown as constantly capable of stripping off the very texture of their inner life, of living an uninterrupted series of moments characterised by the highest

Shavian insight and sagacity, they cease to be independent creatures at all, and become the mere images of men as reflected back by the hard, bright, unshadowed surface of their creator's mind. The truth is that human beings in this very human world are sadly and even consistently muddleheaded. The real Mrs. Warren would have been able to build up her business, never its philosophy; the real Candida would have made Candida's choice in everlasting ignorance of Morrel's weakness and of Eugene's strength; the real Ann Whitfield would never have owned up to methods of which she was sublimely unconscious; the real Mrs. George was but a vulgar profligate.

It will now be clear why I stressed the philosophy of Bernard Shaw. This remarkable writer is not, in the stricter sense, a creative artist at all. The sharp contemporaneousness and vividness of his best settings deceives us. His plays are the theatre of the analytic intellect, not the drama of man. They are a criticism of life, not in the sense of Arnold, but in the plain and literal one. His place is with Lucian rather than with Molière. I do not mean that his dialogues do not play. They play admirably and they will be played increasingly as our English-speaking audiences grow in critical maturity. Few men

will assent to his views, but fewer still will care to deny themselves one of the most vivid and tonic experiences of our age—an intimate contact with that brave, that ruthless, that luminous mind.

V

If Mr. Granville Barker's activity as a producing manager accounts for the fewness of his plays, it is an activity to be sincerely regretted. For his contribution to the modern English drama is one of great originality and native power, even though I seem to discern in his work the meeting of two important influences. Mr. Barker's excellent translation of Schnitzler's *Anatol* points to one of these influences, an hundred bits of internal evidence point to the other, that of Mr. Shaw. One may go very far astray in analysing the conscious artistic processes of so close a contemporary. I venture the theory, however, that Mr. Barker has studied the structural technique of the German naturalists and has determined to carry their method the one possible step further. That is, at all events, consciously or unconsciously, what he has done.

This technical procedure may be illustrated by observing the "curtains" of the eminent naturalistic artists, of Hauptmann or of Galsworthy.

In *Rose Bernd*, for instance, or in *The Eldest Son* each act ends with an observation which, inevitable and unstudied though it be, marks by its special note and tone, a pause, and a stage in the spiritual rhythm of the action. That dramatic rhythm is gained by a series of exquisitely unobtrusive emphases upon the significant, and by silent omission of the non-significant. In *The Madras House* (1909), however, which represents the latest point in Mr. Barker's development, the rhythm of action—emphasis and suppression in the service of unity of effect—is abandoned. Each act ends in the midst of a conversation; so does the whole play, and the stage-direction remarks: "She doesn't finish, for really there is no end to the subject." All of which means that Mr. Barker seeks to follow the broken rhythm of life—the helpless swaying hither and thither of human talk, the pause of embarrassment or sudden blankness which leads to irrelevant changes of subject. In addition, he seeks to illustrate, as in the second act of *The Madras House*, the fact that human affairs run parallel to each other and have often no connection except the accidental one of a single man or woman's being a participant in each. Thus the scandal among the employés of the house and the sale of

the house to the American, Eustice P. State, have nothing in common except that Philip Madras must, necessarily, give his attention to both. Each, to be sure has, upon reflection, a bearing upon the theme of the play which is, once more, the problem of sex. But from the aspect of fable and structure *The Madras House* marks a point at which the avoidance of artifice touches the negation of form.

Negation of form! Having written the words, I am almost ready to retract them. For in truth *The Madras House* is one of the most fascinating of modern plays. Its strange inconsequentialities of structure, its act endings which trail off into a natural silence or simply blend with the ceaseless hum of life seem but to sharpen the peculiar tang of art and thought, extremely keen and personal, that exhales from the play.

The thesis of *The Madras House* is no less arresting than its form. The gradual emancipation of woman in the West has led to the constant, enervating preoccupation with the instinct of sex. Society, politics, education—all bring men and women into contacts which are, consciously or not, sexually stimulating. The vast industries that serve the adornment of even the most cultured of modern women prove these very women to be pri-

marily bent upon emphasising the sexual appeal. To this menace there are two effective retaliations: one, that of the elder Madras, to segregate women as in the Orient, and let men do their work in the world in virile cleanness; the other, that of the younger Madras, to force our civilisation to be less of a "barnyard" in spirit, to wring from it a culture that is not simply a veneer over sexual savagery.

Scarcely less notable a play is *Waste* (1907). It has the same natural, unprogressive, eddying rhythm as *The Madras House*. The associative connections, the articulations of speech, are often hidden, just as in life. The theme of the play is the natural prelude to that of *The Madras House*. A statesman of the finest ideals is utterly ruined by a woman's false use of the freedom that men have given her. The scandal of her death through an illegal operation kills Trebell politically; the fact itself wounds a far nobler side of his nature. And at the root of all the misery is woman's inability to rise to the contemplation of impersonal ends. Amy O'Connell basely shirks the glory of motherhood because Trebell cannot and will not profess a romantic infatuation for her. And even Trebell's admirable sister, at the hour of his deepest need, gently reproaches him

for never having thought of her during all the years of their common life. "No, I never have," he admits, "but I've never thought selfishly either." "That's a paradox," she replies, "I don't quite understand." And Trebell sums up the whole matter: "Until women do they'll remain where they are . . . and what they are." I know few other dialogues or situations in the whole modern drama worth closer pondering for the light thrown on one of the most vexatious and wasteful problems of contemporary life.

Mr. Barker's two earlier plays are less personal and hence of somewhat smaller significance. *The Marrying of Anne Leete* (1899) with which he began is an attempt to carry a specifically modern kind of psychology into the eighteenth century. One has an uncomfortable suspicion throughout the play that one is assisting at a masquerade, and that the real Anne Leete, ancestress of the girl here acting a shadowy idealisation of her fate, would have married Lord John Carp and been vastly pleased with her coach and four. *The Voysey Inheritance* (1905) is a solid and convincing picture of a well-defined section of English society—an exact and finished piece of naturalistic dramaturgy. But it is *Waste* and *The Madras House* that bear witness to a dramatist of

all but the highest promise and originality, if time and circumstance will but assist Mr. Barker to an intenser productivity.

In a volume of sketches and essays beautifully named *The Inn of Tranquillity* (1912) Mr. John Galsworthy (b. 1867) has a dozen pages called *Some Platitudes Concerning the Drama.* I take it that Mr. Galsworthy here uses the word platitude with a gentle and quiet irony not uncharacteristic of him. For he does not, I am sure, nurse the delusion, pleasing as such a delusion would be, that the basic principles of naturalistic dramaturgy have as yet any general acceptance among the English-speaking peoples. But since it is the partial purpose of these pages to contribute to such an acceptance, I cannot do better than sum up these principles once more in the faultless dignity and wisdom of Mr. Galsworthy's phrasing.

"To set before the public no cut and dried codes, but the phenomena of life and character . . . requires a sympathy with, a love of, and a curiosity as to things for their own sake. . . . Matters change and morals change; men remain—and to set men and the facts about them, down faithfully, so that they draw for us the moral of their

natural actions, may also possibly be of benefit to the community. It is, at all events, harder than to set men and facts down, as they ought or ought not to be. . . . The true lover of the human race is surely he who can put up with it in all its forms, in vice as well as in virtue, in defeat as well as in victory. . . . A good plot is that sure edifice which rises out of the interplay of circumstance on temperament, or of temperament on circumstance, within the enclosing atmosphere of an idea. A human being is the best plot there is. . . . He is organic. The art of writing true dramatic dialogue is an austere art, denying itself all license, grudging every sentence devoted to the mere machinery of the play, suppressing all jokes and epigrams severed from character, relying for fun and pathos on the fun and tears of life. . . . The question of naturalistic technique will bear, indeed, much more study than has yet been given it. The aim of the dramatist employing it is evidently to create such an illusion of actual life passing on the stage as to compel the spectator to pass through an experience of his own, to think and talk and move with the people he sees thinking, talking and moving in front of him."

Mr. Galsworthy is the author of eight plays.

Of these one, *Joy* (1907), betrays a less happy mood and art than the others; another, *The Little Dream* (1911), represents what has come to seem the naturalist's almost obligatory excursion into neo-romanticism. It is neither poetry nor prose; the author's imagination has profoundly possessed neither his substance nor his form. Here negative criticism must end. Mr. Galsworthy's remaining six plays are all masterpieces. They are: *The Silver Box* (1906), *Strife* (1909), *The Eldest Son* (1909), *Justice* (1910), *The Pigeon* (1912), *The Fugitive* (1913).[1]

The special note of Galsworthy's art is its restraint. His vision is wonderfully keen and clear and sober. He is intensely watchful not to overstep the modesty of emotions and events. He is never showy, never violent, never a special pleader. In his plays the forces of life themselves come into conflict and grow into crises with all the quiet impressiveness of an operation of nature. A man commits a crime; he is tried and punished. Workingmen strike and are forced to compromise. The inheritors of two sharply divided social traditions are on the point of mar-

[1] To these must now be added the severe dramatic apologue *The Mob* (1914). Fine as that piece is, it makes one fearful lest Mr. Galsworthy abandon "men and the facts about them" for the dramatic exploitation of the naked idea.

riage, and the division is seen to be too deep. A woman flees from a wretched union and wears herself out against the hard prison-walls of the social order. Each of these sentences sums up one of Galsworthy's fables. It also sums up a bit of the homespun stuff of the world's daily life. From that stuff Galsworthy, like Hauptmann and Hirschfeld, wrings beauty and terror, laughter and awe.

In choosing the angle from which, at a given moment, to envisage life, Galsworthy is fond of selecting such living incidents as have in themselves the inevitable structure of drama. In *Strife*, for instance, the first act consists of a directors' meeting of the Trenartha Tin Plate Works. The second act shows the men in their wretchedness, their division and their need. The third act represents the final directors' meeting at which the compromise between capital and labour is accomplished. *Justice* also exhibits a succession of events which is quite simply that of life. In the first act poor Falder's crime and its piteous motives are brought to light. The second act shows his trial; the third his punishment. In the last act we see him a ticket-of-leave man, crushed by the social machine. Galsworthy has not always, of course, been able to attain such magnif-

icent severity of structure. Life itself forbids it. But he has always striven to approach it, economising his strength for the creation of character.

His stage-directions are often psychological and often contain a touch of generalisation. But such touches are never, as in Shaw or Barker, personal and polemic. They never violate the impersonality of dramatic art. They are full rather than lengthy, and attain such fulness by a frugal exactness of diction. Not infrequently they are descriptive. But, as a rule, Galsworthy creates his atmosphere by subtler and less obtrusive means. The raw and sordid cruelty of civilisation and of nature that hovers over the men's meeting in the second act of *Strife* is created by no visible artifice. It inheres in the situation, the hour and the mood.

Galsworthy's dialogue is the best dramatic dialogue in the language. Its illusion of reality is complete; its power of differentiating character from character rivals Hauptmann's. It is, furthermore, in his own excellent phrasing, "handmade, like good lace; clear, of fine texture, furthering with each thread the harmony and strength of a design to which all must be subordinated." And that design is merely the rhythm of the "spiritual action." His power of character-

ising through the tone and temper and form of speech rises to admirable heights in the self-expression of Mrs. Jones in *The Silver Box*, of the several working-men who address their fellows in *Strife*, of Cokeson, the clerk, in *Justice*, and of Sir William Cheshire in *The Eldest Son*. There are few happier or more characteristic touches in the dialogue of the modern drama than when Sir William, profoundly stirred to a defence of his ideals and his class, turns to his wife with these words: "Nowadays they laugh at everything—they even laugh at the word lady—I married *you*, and I don't." But examples are invidious where almost every phrase has the inevitable rightness of this order of art at its best. I borrow a sentence classical in the traditions of our literature to express the bare justice of this matter. Whoever wishes to attain a style in dramatic dialogue, exact but always restrained, natural but never redundant, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Galsworthy.

This temperate and reasonable artist who, surveying man and his world, has never failed to put on

> "the enquirer's holy robe
> And purged, considerate mind,"

discovers that there arise from this survey, more

and more definitely as it is more closely pressed home, a series of moral and social dilemmas of literally tremendous force and import. These dilemmas form the intellectual content of the drama of Galsworthy. He sees them and is able to propound them by reason of the central passion of his soul, which is a passion for justice. Not the ordinary passion for justice of our daily papers and our daily speech, which means justice for some class, some individual or some cause—but justice for all. Galsworthy, in his proper person, for instance, is on the side of labour. Yet he has created no character more massive, heroic or memorable than old Anthony, the ruthless defender of the capitalistic class in *Strife*.

Characteristically, then, his first play depicts the gross inequality in society's treatment of men, and ends with a cry for justice. The miserable and yet tragic Jones writhes in the hands of the constable and frees his soul:

"Call this justice? What about 'im? 'E got drunk! 'E took the purse—'e took the purse but (*in a muffled shout*) it's 'is money got *'im* off! *Justice!*"

And the whole deliberate callousness of the social order is summed up by the fact that no defence answers the arraignment of Jones. The

magistrate rises and remarks: "We will now adjourn for lunch." In this play only, however, is the wrong wholly on one side. We meet the first of the great dilemmas of Galsworthy in *Strife*.

The men of the Trenartha works are on strike. Cold and hunger are upon them. They are abandoned by the unions to whom their demands seem untimely. But Roberts sustains them, lashes them on to desperate resistance. He is not only a reformer and a born leader of men, but a man with a righteous personal grievance against capital. He will not compromise. Neither will Anthony, chairman of the board of directors. Thus the great struggle concentrates itself in one commanding personality on each side. The men deliberate, but when Roberts is called away by his wife's death, they abandon him and accept the lesser demands which the union is willing to make for them. Similarly the directors outvote Anthony and accept the compromise. Roberts and Anthony, the strong men with strong convictions, are broken. The second-rate run the world through half-measures and concessions. Such victory as there is remains with labour. But in our ears echoes the rumbling eloquence of old Anthony: "The men have been treated justly, they have had fair wages, we have always been ready

to listen to complaints. . . . It has been said that masters and men are equal! Cant! There can be only one master in a house! Where two men meet the better man will rule!"

In *Justice* the dilemma is sharper. The economic structure of society on any basis, requires the keeping of certain compacts. It cannot endure such a breaking of these compacts as Falder is guilty of when he changes the figures on the cheque. Yet by the simple march of events it is overwhelmingly proven that society here stamps out a human life not without its fair possibilities —for eighty-one pounds.

The Pigeon is like an exquisite epilogue to these stern dramas. What is society to do with its failures—failures from its own point of view only? For are not Guinevere Meegan and Timson and, above all, the inimitable Ferrand quite infinitely "jolly" as mere human creatures? That is the opinion of the artist Welwyn who goes for wisdom to his friends the professor, the judge and the priest:

"According to Calway, we're to give the State all we can spare, to make the undeserving deserving. He's a professor; he ought to know. But old Hoxton's always dinning it into me that we ought to support private organisations for helping the deserving, and damn the un-

deserving. And the vicar seems to be for a little bit of both. . . . And there's no fun in any of them."

It is from the lips of the incorrigible vagrant Ferrand that at last we hear wisdom. "There are some souls, Monsieur, that cannot be made tame." It is he, too, who propounds the final dilemma of society. "If you do not wish of us, you have but to shut your pockets and your doors—we shall die the faster." To which searching remark Welwyn, or society—whichever you please—can but answer falteringly: "But that, you know—we can't do it now—can we?"

The Eldest Son and *The Fugitive* deal with the more vivid moral dilemmas of the personal life. Sir William Cheshire has just forced one of his game-keepers to marry a village girl whom the lad has wronged. He has upheld the moral law. Immediately he discovers that his eldest son has been guilty of the same conduct with Lady Cheshire's maid. And Bill insists that he will play fair and marry the girl. Sir William, forgetful of the moral law which he has enforced on his dependent, protests to his wife:

"I say it *would* be a tragedy; for you, and me, and all of us. You and I were brought up, and we've brought the children up, with certain beliefs, and wants, and

habits. A man's past—his traditions—he can't get rid of them. They're—they're himself! (*Suddenly*) It shan't go on!"

Is not this utterly unanswerable? Was the marriage of the village lad and lass at all comparable, in the grim necessity of tragic consequences, to a marriage between Bill Cheshire and Freda? The girl and her father have the good sense to see this. But the moral law? . . .

In his most recent play, *The Fugitive*, Galsworthy has for the first time treated the subject of marriage. With his usual sobriety and quiet wisdom he has not chosen a union disrupted by violent or unwonted causes. "But why can't we be happy?" George Dedmond asks. And Clare returns the overwhelmingly sufficient and fundamental answer: "I see no reason except that you are you and I am I." But this best of all possible reasons is considered no reason at all at present. The force of the law and of public opinion are wholly on the husband's side. And Clare is neither a skilled worker nor "a saint and a martyr." With complete inevitableness she is forced to the brink of prostitution—the only unskilled labour for a woman that pays. And since moral and physical inhibitions prevent her from taking the leap, there is left—just death.

Such are the plays of John Galsworthy. But these interpretative outlines scarcely touch the finest triumph of his art which lies in the creation of character. No modern dramatist, indeed, save Hauptmann and Schnitzler, can show within the limits of six plays so memorable an array of human figures: The Barthwick family and the Jones's in *The Silver Box;* Anthony and Roberts, Thomas and Harness and Rouse in *Strife;* the Hows, father and son, Cokeson, Falder and Ruth in *Justice;* Sir William Cheshire in *The Eldest Son;* the wonderful Ferrand in *The Pigeon;* George and Clare Dedmond and Malise in *The Fugitive.*

Galsworthy's activity as a dramatist extends but over a period of eight years. Yet I see a new novel by him make its appearance with a pang of apprehension and disappointment. For he, above all other men now in view, seems called and chosen as the great modern dramatist of the English tongue.

VI

The modern drama in England, represented by Shaw and Barker and Galsworthy, differs from the modern drama in Germany and in France not so vitally by its extent, as by the underlying cause

of that narrow extent—the lack of an adequate audience. Inheritors of the noblest literature since antiquity, possessors of names that have turned the current of the world's thought—the great mass of the English-speaking peoples is still imprisoned in the iron vise of moral inflexibility and intellectual prejudice. On theology, on ethics, on art, opinions are still currently held in England and America by people called intelligent which, in the central intellectual life of the world, have long passed into the region of history. The only hope for the art of the drama, as for all higher forms of spiritual activity among us—and this applies most emphatically to us Americans—rests in the possibility that our universities may gradually assume, in the classroom and beyond it, their highest duty to the democracy: the creation of a large and cultured class, flexible in intellect, liberal in judgment, not shocked by plain speaking, nor insulted by art, nor outraged by the radiant face of truth.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE NEO-ROMANTIC MOVEMENT IN THE EUROPEAN DRAMA

I

BEFORE the naturalistic movement had conquered the stage, a protest was raised against it in the land of its origin. The protest was not led by reactionaries, but by young men nursing a new vision. Ostensibly they fought a literary method, in reality a philosophy of hard despair. To-day naturalism means probity of observation, an attempt to interpret life through itself. There is no vision, no hope for the soul of man that is not reconcilable with the naturalism which created *Rose Bernd* or *Strife*. In 1885 naturalism meant the positivistic denial of the existence of vision, of the reasonableness of hope. It was the literary embodiment of a doctrinaire science, a science which rapid and wonderful achievement had rendered arrogant. The echo of that arrogance is heard in the critical utterances of Zola. "An identical determinism rules the stone in the road and the brain of man;" "our works have the ex-

actness, the solidity and the practical applications of works of science." He is scornful of those who object to the experimental novel "through some more or less conscious attachment to religious or philosophic beliefs." The temper of that last phrase is noteworthy. Positivism not only fought an impossible dogma; it denied the possibility of any philosophic interpretation of the sum of things. The real character of that early protest against naturalism was not long unrecognised. It was made, as M. Edouard Rod said in 1891, "because naturalism was the literary expression of an entire positivistic and materialistic movement which no longer answers any actual needs."

Creatively the French protest against naturalism took two forms: that of the psychological novel and that of the symbolist movement in poetry. The five young artists who, in 1887, issued a public manifesto against the "superficial observation and the inordinate stressing of the note of ordure" in Zola's *La Terre*, were all psychological novelists. The group, however, did not include M. Paul Bourget whose excellent masterpiece *Le Disciple* (1889) sums up the moral and artistic reaction against naturalism of the early positivistic type.

This development in the art of fiction did not touch the drama at any point. It is otherwise with the symbolist movement in poetry from which proceeds, directly or indirectly, the neo-romantic drama of Maeterlinck, of Hugo von Hofmannsthal and of William Butler Yeats. That movement protested against the marmoreal outline, the steely clang, the proud impersonality of the Parnassian school. But its protest, too, was in reality a deeper one. For the impersonal aloofness of Leconte de Lisle is but a gesture by which he seeks to hide his grinding despair. His *Dies Irae* (*Poèmes antiques*, 1852) and his *L'Illusion suprême* (*Poèmes tragiques*, 1884) are beautiful and terrible at once. But that way madness lies. There are philosophies which are unendurable not because men are cowards, but because they are men.

The official founder of the symbolist school, Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–1898) published his collected verses in 1888. But the real master of the movement, Paul Verlaine (1844–1896), a lyrical poet of the first order, had published his mature collections *Sagesse* and *Jadis et naguère* in 1881 and 1885. Beneath a good deal of merely verbal mysticism and obscurity in their theoretical writings the aim of the symbolists ap-

pears clearly and intelligibly enough: to depict the frail, the exquisite and fugitive movements of the soul as these necessarily blend with and identify themselves with the external appearances which our sense perceives. In this aspect nature is, in sober truth, an array of symbols of the soul's life. These symbols and their subjective content the new school sought to render in fluid and trembling forms, in the haunting music of a flexible versification. Both their theory and their method have been explained by Hugo von Hofmannsthal. "A certain gesture with which you leaped from a tall wagon; a sultry, starless summer night; the odour of moist stones in a hallway; the sensation of icy water which a fountain made to sparkle over your hands—all your inner life is bound to a few thousands of such earthly things, all your exaltations, all your yearning, all your ecstasies. . . . There are combinations of words from which, as the spark from the beaten flint, break forth the landscapes of the soul, which are immeasurable as the starry heaven and stretch out into space and time." Mr. Yeats has summed up the same fundamental idea. "What is literature but the expression of moods by the vehicle of symbol and incident?"

From the symbolist's escape out of the world

of hard and objective forms which science presents, into the twilight of the soul where the seer and his vision are one, it was but a step toward an open scepticism of that science with its necessary assertion of the complete externality to the knower of the thing known. The whole development of thought from evasive to militant neo-romanticism is expressed with unsurpassable justness by Anatole France. I gather these highly significant passages from the four volumes of his *La vie littéraire*. "It is most clear that the strong confidence we once had in science is more than half lost. . . . What are these things you call sciences, if you please? Spectacles, no more, no less. . . . An argument pursued on any complex subject will never prove anything but the ability of the mind that conducts it. . . . There is no such thing as objective criticism, any more than there is such a thing as objective art, and people who flatter themselves that they are putting anything but their own selves into their works are dupes of the most fallacious delusion. . . . We know very well to-day that the romance of the universe is as deceptive as any other, but at that time the books of Darwin were our Bible. . . . The things which touch us most nearly, which seem to us loveliest and most desirable are pre-

cisely those which will always remain vague to us and, in part, mysterious. Beauty, virtue, genius—these will forever guard their secret. Neither the charm of Cleopatra, nor the sweetness of Saint Francis, nor the poetry of Racine, will ever submit to formulation; if these things sustain a relation to science, it is to a science blended with art, with intuition, a restless and ever unfinished one. That science or rather that art exists: it is philosophy, ethics, history, criticism, in brief, the whole beautiful romance of humanity." The protest against science has risen spontaneously to the lips of every neo-romanticist. "The scientific movement is ebbing a little everywhere . . ." writes Mr. Yeats, "and I am certain that everywhere literature will return once more to its old extravagant, phantastical expression, for in literature, unlike science, there are no discoveries, and it is always the old that returns." And, in another place, he speaks with a brave and mystical beauty: "Let us go forth, the tellers of tales, and seize whatever prey the heart longs for, and have no fear. Everything exists, everything is true, and the earth is only a little dust under our feet."

These quotations are somewhat long. But they serve, as nothing else can, to mark the spiritual

temper of the neo-romantic movement, the grounds of the protest against naturalism. That protest, so eloquently phrased was, after all, polemic and hence unjust. Objective truth, cold, definite, its content eternally separate from the knowing mind—that is beyond our reach. In so far the neo-romanticists emphasised a fact of supreme value. But there are orders of experience which, granting the school its own ground, rise oftener, more definitely and more concretely into the field of human consciousness than others. The kinds of experience set down in *Michael Kramer*, in *Amants*, in *The Eldest Son* belong to this type. It is the rarer and more incommunicable soul in which arises the type of experience interpreted in Hofmannsthal's *Der Tor und der Tod* or in Yeats' *The King's Threshold*. Hence whenever naturalistic art ceases to base itself on a shallow positivism and thus abandons its one mistake, it reassumes at once the high human validity that belongs to it. Nor, finally, were the neo-romanticists willing to grant naturalism its disciplinary and formative influence upon their own work. Yet what so fundamentally differentiates them from the romantics of the early nineteenth century is the solidity of their psychology.

The supreme merit of *Henry of Auë* and of *Chantecler* arises from the fact that beauty and vision grow here from nothing extravagant and phantastical but from genuine experiences in the soul of man. And that genuineness is the gift of naturalism.

The liberation of speculative thought from the cold weight of positivism went hand in hand with the liberation of beauty. From 1884 to 1892 appeared the successive parts of Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra;* in 1895 Ferdinand Brunetière's highly symptomatic *La Science et la Réligion;* in 1897 William James announced in *The Will to Believe* the first crystallisation of a point of view which we shall see again and again arising spontaneously from the poetic drama of the age. The naturalistic drama, meanwhile, progressed uninterruptedly. But pure form and pure vision united once more in the attempt to offer a synthetic interpretation of life. And there I have touched upon the true difference between these two orders of art: naturalism sees life analytically; neo-romanticism sees it synthetically. Naturalism sets down the facts of experience; neo-romanticism (or classicism, for that matter) distils what seems to it their essence into significant

forms. Naturalism describes love and hate and the many things that fill the world; neo-romanticism meets

> "under the boughs of love and hate,
> In all poor foolish things that live a day,
> Eternal beauty wandering on her way."

II

As early as 1883 the symbolist movement in French poetry had gained a number of young adherents in Belgium. From this group, which expressed itself through a periodical, *La jeune Belgique*, arose the founder of the symbolist drama, Maurice Maeterlinck (b. 1862). In the anthologies of the symbolist lyric his name stands among the names of Verhaeren, Vielé-Griffin, Moréas and Kahn, signed to verses of a strange and evanescent beauty. These verses, it may be noted, had a profound influence upon the work of our American poet, Richard Hovey. But toward the end of the decade Maeterlinck turned to the drama and published *La Princesse Maleine* (1889).

His activity as a dramatist falls into two very distinct periods. His symbolist plays precede the year 1901 and end with *Soeur Béatrice*. The appearance of *Monna Vanna* in 1902 inaugurates

a series of dramas differing markedly both in character and value from his earlier work.

In the plays of his first period he "has disengaged art from the details of actuality" and achieved a "mystic density" of texture. But a doom more dread and terrifying than any positivistic determinism, a blind and malevolent fate, strikes with breathlessness and awe these kings and princesses and lovers by the green shimmer of their inland seas. The strange iterations of their speech with its monotony as of dripping water in an echoing vault deepens the impression of flickering helplessness. And man here has built his very habitations as a reflex of his crushing doom. For in the castles, long corridors confuse the feverish souls who walk in them and lead their steps to subterranean caverns where a dead and creeping sea beats at the crumbling walls. There is neither hope nor faith. Only the madman crosses himself. There is not even spiritual action in this drama, for there is no escape, however fleeting or deceptive, from the malignity of fate. "You never can tell if you have made a movement for yourself, or if it be chance that has met with you," it is said in *Alladine et Palomides* (1894). Ablamore, in the same play, says: "You did what was ordained and so did

I." The same thought is stressed in *Pélléas et Mélisande* (1892). "He has done what he probably must have done." Fate is ever present, like the dread queen in *La Mort de Tintagiles* (1894) whom men must "love with a great, unpitying weight on their souls."

These early plays then, in so far as they have any recognisable relation to human experience, interpret it—by a shadowy parallel creation—in terms of the strictest fatalism. By a parallel creation! For human life is in no wise, however subtle, imitated here. Men may be fated, but they are fated, above all, to a conviction of freedom at every moment of action.

The subjects of most of Maeterlinck's symbolist plays represent merely his peculiar atmosphere investing themes that have long been the possession of literature and legend. *La Princesse Maleine* is a long variation upon Shakespearean motifs: the terror and expectancy at the opening of *Hamlet*, the sense of doom in the great murder scene in *Macbeth*. At times the reminiscence becomes almost verbal, as in the saying of the old king: "It would take all the waters of the flood to baptise me now." *Pélléas et Mélisande* is clearly a variation upon the story of Paolo and Francesca; *Alladine et Palomides*, of the legend

of Tristran and Iseult. *Ariane et Barbe-bleu* (1901) is, as its title indicates, a symbolist interpretation of the tale of Bluebeard; *Soeur Béatrice* (1901) deals with the legend so powerfully told by John Davidson in his *Ballad of a Nun*. *Les Sept Princesses* (1891), *La Mort de Tintagiles* (1894), and *Aglavaine et Sélysette* (1896) have no legendary background. They are wholly atmospheric—human wraiths sway in the bitter winds of fate.

These plays are full of memorable touches. Some are touches of pathos, as in *La Princesse Maleine:* "If you had at least put her to death in the open air! But here, in a little room! In a poor little room!" Some are touches of a poignant imaginative charm, as that description in *La Mort de Tintagiles:* "There reigned such a silence that the falling of a ripe fruit in the park called faces to the windows." But the most sympathetic and patient reader will, at length, weary of the monotony of the point of view and of the atmosphere of these dramas. I must not, upon the principles of early symbolism, ask so crude a question as: What, in the end, is it all about? I content myself with pointing out that the poverty of intellectual content—I can discern in all these plays but the one idea of fatalism—

needed, to make it supportable, a far richer, more varied and more flexibly imaginative medium than Maeterlinck has ever been able to command.

I have purposely left three plays of Maeterlinck's first period to the last. For in these three his method takes on a higher and finer meaning; they deal impressively and nobly, through such synthetic symbolism as the pure theories of the school demand, with universal facts of human experience: the suddenness of death's imminence; the dazed searching for faith; the solitariness of the soul. I have already named the three plays by indicating their themes: *L'Intruse* (1890), *Les Aveugles* (1890), *L'Intérieur* (1894).

Here we have symbolism at its purest and most exquisite. Death is not named in *L'Intruse*, nor faith in *Les Aveugles*, nor loneliness and division in *L'Intérieur*. But so exquisite is the adaptation of the symbolical incidents and imagery that the universal truth is in each instance brought overwhelmingly home. The forest of the world, for example, in *Les Aveugles* has "an eternal look" despite the death of man's immemorial faith. The blindness of men cannot discern that look. Yet there are happy souls who in the visible presence of faith's death still smell "an odour of flowers about us." Man, the reasoner and pos-

itivist, answers sadly: "I smell only the smell of the earth." *L'Intérieur* is mere perfection in its kind. A thousand human sorrows are summed up in it, a thousand grievous estrangements. The sayings of the Old Man beside that haunting window have a touch of immortal loveliness and of timeless wisdom. In the brief compass of this little play the symbolical drama in prose and the art of Maeterlinck both reach their unmistakable culmination.

With *Monna Vanna* (1902) he conquered the European stage and became a conventional playwright. The speeches of Guido's father and of Giovanna herself still keep a touch of the old aloofness, the old estrangedness in a mortal world. But the atmosphere is formed of the traditional blood and lust and gold of the early Renaissance; the central incident is of an Elizabethan violence; the resolution of the dramatic conflict commands the assent of neither the imagination nor the reason. Sudermann might well have arranged these very effective struggles that compel one's momentary attention but leave one's deeper sense of both poetry and reality affronted and betrayed.

The art of *Marie Madeleine* (1910) is purer and less popular. The contrast of Longinus' cold and melancholy wisdom with the passionate

and more human hopefulness of the new faith rings true in itself and is dramatically of fine temper. Nor is it easy to urge a definite objection against the result of that conflict by which Mary abandons her Master to save her Lord. The atmosphere of the land is indicated and the mood of those few solemn days. But throughout the play there is a slight sense of strain, of effort, of an essentially fragile and unhuman genius dealing with matters too large for its delicate grasp—a weaver of wind-shaken tapestry striving to hew Titans out of the rocks of the earth.

Maeterlinck's best-known contribution to the modern drama is *L'Oiseau bleu* (1909). The success of the play has been epoch-making, especially in the United States and in Russia. It has carried his name where he was hitherto unknown or a shadow; it has earned him a fortune extraordinary even in these days of dramatic profits. So soon as one regards the play quite closely the apparent riddle of this huge success is solved. The form is symbolical to be sure, but not with the close and intimate symbolism of *Les Aveugles* or *Intérieur*. The play consists rather of a series of little allegories which he who runs may read and he who listens with but half an ear may understand. And what is the content of these allegories?

That the dead live in our memories of them (Act II, Scene I), that simple pleasures are best and most harmless (III, II), that man is conquering disease (III, I), and that he will more and more subdue the forces of nature (V, III), and finally, that happiness need not be sought afar but waits for us at home. Briefly, the play expresses a cheap and shallow optimism. No, rather a pseudo-optimism that deceives the crowd. For if the dead live only in our memory of them, the hope of the world is indeed a self-deception. And if that hope be a deceptive one the progress of both medicine and invention is but a drug to palliate the agony of our path to corruption. It little matters whether a train run fast or slow, on a good roadbed or bad, if in ten minutes it is doomed to plunge over the edge of a cliff into eternal nothingness.

Looked at in detail *L'Oiseau bleu* will be seen to contain not a few charming and poetic touches. It is the work, after all, of a man of genius, but of one whose genius attained but a few moments of perfect expression and whose really masterly and memorable work posterity will probably gather between the covers of one tiny volume holding *L'Intruse*, *Les Aveugles* and *Intérieur*.

III

In the land of its origin symbolism never reached the stage. The symbolical drama is a creation of children of the great mystical races—the Germanic Maeterlinck and Hauptmann, the Jewish Hofmannsthal, the Irish Yeats. The work of the foremost neo-romantic dramatist of France is symbolical only as all poetry is symbolical in its imaginative texture and its final meaning, but in no special or esoteric sense.

Edmond Rostand (b. 1868), a Frenchman of the South, son of an eminent publicist and scholar of Marseilles, is one of the most remarkable, one of the most widely heralded and, in English-speaking countries, one of the least known writers of our time. For Rostand's virtue lies in his form, in the abundance and splendour of his poetic eloquence. But it is no easy matter to read him with the French of Stratford-atte-Bowe, current among us since the days of Chaucer's Prioress. Nor, on the other hand, is it possible to gain any notion of his power from the current American translations of his two best plays. That of *Cyrano de Bergerac* is in wooden blank verse; that of *Chantecler* in bald prose. Is not that an instance of incompetence glorying in its

shame? Hence I shall illustrate this interpretation of his work by translations of several passages in which, substituting of course the English heroic verse for the French Alexandrine, I have attempted to present a shadow, at least, of his real qualities.

He opened his career as a dramatist in 1894 with a comedy in verse called *Les Romanesques*. The title points to a gentle polemic intention, anti-naturalistic of course, which is deftly but distinctly stressed in several passages. "The scene is laid wherever you please, if only the costumes be pretty." The hero and the heroine are introduced in the act of reading the story of those "immortal lovers," Romeo and Juliet. A hint is borrowed from that play, another from *Troilus and Cressida*. Action and character are of the slightest and are intentionally attuned to the traditional moods of romance. But the whole play sings and trills like a garden full of birds, an early presage of the poetic richness and fecundity of Rostand's genius. At the play's end several of the characters turn to the audience, even as Rosalind did at the close of *As You Like It*, and offer a description and defence of it in the alternate strains of a rondel:

"Love at his flute within a garden close,
Rest for our nerves from all these bitter plays;
O'er scenes by Watteau gentle music flows,
A brief and honest tale our author shows
Of parents, lovers, walled and flowery ways
And costumes clear and rimes and roundelays."

A touch of the merely trivial and pretty apparent now and then in *Les Romanesques* was strictly eliminated by Rostand from his second play *La Princesse lointaine* (1895). The story of the play, that of the troubadour Rudel and the Lady of Tripoli, is well-known through Browning's poem. Rostand has given the episode, so extraordinarily poetic in itself, a somewhat deeper meaning. The love of Rudel for the far away princess becomes in the play, quite naturally, the type of all disinterested striving, of all loyalty to an unseen good. This inner sense of the story is expressed in the really golden lyric of Rudel which echoes and re-echoes throughout the play.

"O Love supreme that burns
Hopeless of love's returns;
Tireless by night it yearns,
And day!
With such vain dreams that are
Loftier than life can mar
I love the Princess far
Away."

The scenes on shipboard and at the lady's court are sharply visualised. But the chief merit of the play is in the lilt and ripple, the brightness and iridescence of the beautiful verses.

But neither the unwearied and unwearying magnificence of his Alexandrines nor the three marvellous songs of the woman of Samaria could save Rostand's play of that name (*La Samaritaine*, 1896) from artistic failure. His gorgeous Latin romanticism is glaringly out of place in the stern bareness of that Hebraic world. When finally Jesus appears as an acting and speaking character, one turns away from M. Rostand as from an admirable friend suddenly guilty of some gross error of taste.

That error, however, was easily forgotten in the unparalleled public triumph of the following year (1897) which witnessed the appearance of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Rostand's verse had, perhaps, been more truly poetical and of a more engaging sweetness in his earlier plays. But never before had it been so brave, so brilliant or so copious. And the splendour of execution is here supported by a solid substructure in the shape of a first-rate poetic study of character. For Cyrano is superbly alive. There is no question as to the man's earthborn reality. A dreamer, a lover and

a poet, cursed with a nose to make children scream and women laugh! What would you have him be but truculent, embittered, wildly independent? What could he do but nurse his enforced renunciations in the solitude of his soul and clothe them with what dreams he might? His fine and final triumph may not be wholly credible. But who will find it in his heart to quarrel with an invention so poetical, so exquisite and so human? Roxane, the lady of Cyrano's heart, is in love with a fair-faced fool. Cyrano writes the boy's letters for him, speaks his adoring words, infuses his whole soul into the empty Gascon. And when the years have gone Roxane discovers whose soul she really loved and whose loss she really mourned. Nor, in estimating the convincingness of the play's incidents must it be forgotten that Rostand has delineated his milieu—the Paris of Molière—with the breadth and scrupulousness of a naturalist. It is in this framework that the deeds and even the last triumph of Cyrano assume their satisfying verisimilitude. That triumph is his only one. He is not even happy in the desired occasion of his death.

> "Speaking some day, beneath a sunset sky,
> A happy word for some fair cause, I'd die!"

Such had been his wish and he falls victim to a vulgar and humiliating accident. But the man's indomitable spirit and his valorous humour rise above the wretchedness of his end.

"Mine ancient enemies I recognise:
Lying and Cowardice and Compromise—
The hosts of Prejudice! *I* palter now?
In death nor life! There, Folly, too art thou!
I know it well, thou'lt hurl me into night!
It matters not! I fight! I fight! I fight!
Thou hast robbed me of the laurel and the rose;
Take them! Despite thee at this bitter close
I carry to the Heavenly Courts to-night,
Where my salute shall sweep those thresholds bright,
One thing, despite thee, stainless of my doom,
Erect, unspotted, foldless!—'Tis my plume!"

The play may not have the full lyric charm, the singing quality of *La Princesse lointaine;* the eloquence may have hardened a little. It is nevertheless full of most admirable details: Cyrano's tirade on noses, on poetic independence, on the piper of his native land, his duelling ballade and his ballade on the *cadets* of Gascony. Everywhere the medium thrills with life and with superb audacity. The art, doubtless, is never of the highest. Beside the sombre spiritual elevation of Hauptmann's *Henry of Auë* a shadow as of

breathing may seem to fall on its burnished surface. But of its kind it is infinitely beautiful and engaging.

I must omit any detailed consideration of the powerful and pathetic play *L'Aiglon* (1900). It added no new element to Rostand's art. For ten years the poet was silent and then produced the widely heralded *Chantecler*. It is, as every one knows, an apologue in which Rostand has used the very ancient device of a world of speaking and reasoning animals. This method he has carried out with very sharp concreteness and with a very felicitous blending, in the various beasts, of the human, allegorical and animal notes. The golden pheasant does not cease to be a pheasant because she is an uncommonly womanly woman, or the blackbird to be a blackbird because he is an extreme modern and a cynic; Patou, the dog, is a dog and an old idealist to boot. Chantecler, above all, is most excellently cock-like, although he is a poet, a philosopher and a lover. The two scenes, furthermore, of the farmyard and the forest—so charmingly described in the sonnets that serve as stage-directions—are filled with a multiform and breathing life that convinces the imagination most happily. The central incident of the play is as

well-known as its general plan. Chantecler believes that his crowing causes the sun to rise. The golden pheasant lures him into the forest where the singing of the nightingales makes him forget to crow. The sun rises and his tragic disillusion overtakes him. But the cock is neither a coward nor a shirker.

> "Faith that so deeply in the soul has lain,
> Still seeks its habitation, even slain."

Nor is he left without a mission; he may still cheer his fellows.

> "For in grey mornings when poor beasts awake,
> Not daring to believe that night is done,
> My metal clarion will replace the sun."

The pheasant urges him to forget his disillusion. His answer comes without hesitation:

> "Nay, I ween
> I'll never forget that noble forest green,
> Wherein I learned that he whose dream has died
> Must perish or arise in nobler pride."

It is not necessary to press the meaning of the fable too closely. Chantecler is a poet who loses faith in his ideal activity and turns to practical helpfulness. Or else man, having lost faith in himself as the centre of the universe and creating

a hardier faith by which to live. That these, as well as several other interpretations, are possible demonstrates the rich and valid humanity hidden in this play of beasts. Its liberal and fine moral flavour is best perceived when any definite interpretation is avoided.

The poetic and imaginative texture of *Chantecler* is the richest if not the sweetest that even Rostand has achieved. The medium is marvellously flexible and alive in every fibre. There is no otiose syllable, no forced rhyme, no awkward rhythm in all this shining and resounding river of verse. Chantecler's *Ode to the Sun*, the villanelle of the nightingales, above all, the lovely prayer of the birds in the fourth act, belong to the triumphs of French poetry and French versification. Perhaps the most brilliant piece of poetic eloquence in the play is Chantecler's confession of his faith in his crowing:

"The cry that takes from earth its upward flight
It is a cry of passion for the light;
It is the shivering cry of love's dismay
For that most golden thing we call the day.
This all would see: the pine upon its bark,
The paths now pathless in their mosses dark;
The grain would see a flash on delicate blade,
The smallest flint its facets fiery made.
Oh, 'tis the eager cry of all that yearn

To have their colour, brightness, flame return;
It is the suppliant cry the meadow cries
For rainbows in its myriad dewy eyes;
'Tis the sonorous prayer by forests made
For fires of dawn in their obscurest glade;
The cry which to the azure soars through me,
'Tis the great cry of all things that would be
Saved from the abyss of darkness and disgrace,
Now punished by the sungod's hidden face;
The cry of sleepless fear, of cold, of blight,
Of all disarmed and driven by the night—
Of the rose trembling in the dark alone,
Of the grain drying for the miller's stone,
Of ploughs forgotten by the reaper's care
Eager to cleave the sod; of things most fair
That have aweary of their dullness grown,
The cry of guileless beasts happy to own
Their innocent deeds in the broad face of day,
Of streams desiring the all-piercing ray.
Thy works disown thee, Night! The pools desire
To glitter gorgeously, the very mire
Dreams of the earth 'twill be in the sun's heat.
It is the field's magnificent cry for wheat
To pierce its bosom through the glowing hours,
It is the flowering tree's cry for new flowers,
It is the grape's cry for a russet cheek,
The bridge's cry for some brave foot to seek
Its path upon whose trembling planks are stirred
Shadows of trees, hiding the shadowy bird;
The cry of all that would be singing, lose
Its grief and live again and be of use;
Of the dumb stone glad in its warmth to lie

For hands to seek, or ants to scurry by;
It is the cry toward light of all the wealth
Of all earth's Beauty and of all its Health;
Of all that would, in sunshine and in joy,
Follow, erect and clear-eyed, their employ;
And when in me this vast appeal to day
Rises, my soul grows larger that it may,
Being more spacious, utter that great cry
Greatlier still and more sonorously.
Yet, ere it sounds, one moment I control
Piously that vast clarion in my soul:
But when at last it soars at nature's need
I am convinced of a supernal deed:
My faith proclaims—I shatter with my crow
Night's ramparts like the walls of Jericho!"

These verses do not, even in my bald translation, quite lose their admirable and stintless eloquence. It is not, assuredly, the highest poetry. A line of Milton or of Wordsworth makes the verse of Rostand seem somewhat hard, glaring and earthly. One need but think of

"More safe I sing with mortal voice unchanged
To hoarse or mute . . ."

or of

"Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns . . ."

to feel that. But this is true of all the Titans, rather than the gods of song—of Dryden, Cor-

neille, Schiller. But of these masters of poetic eloquence, an eloquence touched, in his case, by many breathings of an exquisite modern lyricism, M. Rostand is the legitimate successor.

IV

Germany, the land in which the naturalistic drama reached its highest development, also bade the most eager welcome to the new awakening of romance. Many influences and streams of tendency helped to bring this about. The altruistic ethics basic to naturalism were replaced in many minds by the stern qualitative morality of Nietzsche. Readers of *Also sprach Zarathustra* felt, in addition, the impact of one of the great masters of plastic human speech whose influence upon the style of modern German prose and verse cannot be overestimated. There was besides, in the literature of the mid-century, a tradition of somewhat coldly finished imaginative work represented by such potent names as Paul Heyse and Adolf Wilbrandt. And this tradition gave the decisive impulse to at least one neo-romanticist, Ludwig Fulda (b. 1862). Most powerful, however, was the example of foreign masters. In the ideals of the youngest generation Zola and Tolstoi, Ibsen and Dostoieffsky, yielded to Baudelaire

and Verlaine, Maeterlinck and Swinburne, D'Annunzio and Oscar Wilde. And thus once more periodicals [1] and coteries heralded a literary revolution.

Naturalism has outlasted that revolution. It will outlast many more. For a time, however, neo-romantic plays commanded not only the market but the stage. The success of Fulda's *Talisman* (1892) was so resounding, the refreshment felt in the presence of good verse and graceful imagery was so sincere, that the German drama became, for a space, a gorgeous and glowing spectacle in which faery land and never-never land, classic and oriental antiquity and, above all, the Italian Renaissance blended in a bewildering array of forms. Yet all these plays owned the inheritance and the invaluable discipline of naturalism in the logical firmness of their structure and in their sound and subtle psychology. It was naturalism that lent them all the qualities by which they differ, upon the whole, so advantageously from the productions of an earlier generation of romantic dramatists.

Temporarily, at least, the neo-romantic movement could claim almost every German playwright

[1] *Pan*, 1895–1899; *Die Insel*, 1899–1902; *Blätter für die Kunst*, 1892–1898.

of note. Sudermann wrote his *Johannes* (1898) and *Die drei Reiherfedern* (1898); Schnitzler his delightful *Paracelsus* (1892) and his elaborate *Der Schleier der Beatrice* (1899); even the consistent naturalists Halbe (*Die Insel der Seligen*, 1905) and Hirschfeld (*Der Weg zum Licht*, 1902) yielded to the enchantment of the imagination. Nor did the movement fail to produce isolated works of not inconsiderable power and charm, such as Frau Bernstein's *Königskinder* (1895) and Otto Julius Bierbaum's *Gugeline* (1899). The rank and file of the neo-romantic drama, however, will prove ephemeral. Its music will grow thin and its brightness tarnish. I am sorry to be forced to echo the consensus of German criticism to this effect even upon the work of that tireless and earnest spirit, Ludwig Fulda. He has been able to identify himself imaginatively neither with faery land nor with the East, neither with antiquity nor the Renaissance nor the realm of Arthurian legend. The bright and musical verses glide past, the clever ideas hold the mind for a moment: neither the imagination nor the soul has been touched. The permanent German contribution to the neo-romantic drama is to be found in the work of Hauptmann and Hugo von Hofmannsthal.

What distinguishes Hauptmann from all other contemporary playwrights on the Continent is not only his austere power as an artist, but his profoundly religious nature. He is not committed to any dogma nor the Pharisaism of any moral convention. But he lives not only in the world; he lives in the universe. Like Goethe, like the great poets of England, he is aware, above all, of the three or four eternal problems that exercise the spirit of man. From his most uncompromisingly naturalistic plays—from *The Weavers*, *Drayman Henschel*, *Michael Kramer*, *Rose Bernd*—there rises that heavenward yearning of which he has spoken, the struggling cry of men, even though broken by despair, for some reconciliation with the universe in which they live. To such a nature the impulse necessarily came to grasp a number of human problems synthetically, and to express his innermost self with that directness which only poetry permits.

His first departure from naturalism was partial and tentative. In *Hannele* (1893) the earthly environment is contemporary and crass in the extreme. But the significance of the fable lies in the fact that even from such an environment the heavenly yearning may ascend. Hannele Mattern is the child of outcasts; she dies a wretched

death in the poorhouse. But the neo-romantic passages of the play are the crystallisation of the visions, the dreams, the ecstasies of that pure and pious imagination. In the feverish longings of her tormented adolescence she loves her teacher; in the visions of her faltering mind she blends his figure with the Saviour's. And still her dreams are shot with natural, childish longings for the visible splendour of her faery princesses. The psychology is as exact as the poetry is lovely—full of a tremor of mystical sweetness that vibrates especially in the closing chorus of the angelic messengers:

"A solemn greeting we bring thee
Borne far through the darkness of space;
Upon the edge of our pinions
A breath of the heavenly grace.

A wafture prophetic of Springtime
From the hem of our garments is shed,
On our lips that salute thee with singing,
The blossom of dawn is red.

O mystical green of our homeland!
Our feet with its radiance are shod;
In the deeps of our eyes there shimmer
The spires of the City of God."

The Sunken Bell (1906), though raised by its

form and method into the realm of the timeless, is the drama of the creative thinker of our age. The problem of the modern artist is—as Hauptmann has shown in *Lonely Lives* and again, quite recently, in *Gabriel Schilling's Flight*—the conflict between personal and ideal ends. However blended with other motifs, the kernel of the play is there. The faith by which Heinrich, the bell-founder, lives is a faith in the presence of the creative power in his soul.

"What's germed within me's worthy of the blessing—
Worthy the ripening."

His one aim is to see that germ ripen regardless of the world and its rewards, regardless of his personal happiness. To understand the play, it is necessary to lay hold upon the deep reality and sincerity of that thought. Into the soul of the true artist all forms and features of life bring only an added pang if its central purpose is unrealised. And it is this truth which the homely environment of Heinrich's personal life does not know. His bell falls into the mere. And Magda, his wife, exclaims:

> "Pray Heaven that be the worst!
> What matter one bell more or less, if he
> The master be but safe."

The master is indeed alive though full of despair because the bell, as he alone knows, was lost by no mere chance.

"'Twas for the valley, not the mountain-top!"

And to this cry of the artist's despair his wife replies:

"That is not true! Hadst thou but heard as I
The Vicar tell the Clerk in tones that shook,
How gloriously 'twill sound upon the heights."

The opinion of the vicar and the clerk are her norm. Of the unapproached ideal she knows nothing. Thus Heinrich, driven by what is deepest in him, goes up into the hills and finds a spirit of beauty and refreshment, Rautendelein; he finds the pagan, pre-Christian world of nature. Here he will bring his treasures to light. There is no hardness of heart in his abandonment of his home. He cannot help Magda, for to her his wine would be "but bitter gall and venom." He stays upon the heights with Rautendelein; all nature aids him to build the temple of his dreams. The ignorant cries of hide-bound men only convince him more

"Of the great weight and purpose of his mission."

And yet he fails. It is the tragedy of the creative

soul. Too great a part of himself is merely human and clings to the homely realities and affections of his merely human life.

> "Yonder I am at home . . . and yet a stranger—
> Here am I strange . . . and yet I am at home."

His children bring their mother's tears up the mountainside and the sunken bell, stirred by her dead hands, tolls the destruction of his hopes. Yet he dies clasping his creative vision to his heart. For it is better to die so than to return to the "service of the valleys" where the ideal is an outcast and a stranger.

In *Henry of Auë* (1903), the second culminating point of Hauptmann's neo-romantic drama, he has dealt, through the medium of a legend known in German literature for nearly a thousand years, with the problem of natural evil. The legend tells of a great knight and lord who was smitten with leprosy and whom, according to the mediæval belief, a pure maiden desired to heal through the shedding of her blood. But God, before the sacrifice could be consummated, cleansed the knight's body and permitted to him and the maiden a united temporal happiness. The framework of this story Hauptmann takes as he finds it. But the characters are made to

live with a new life. The stark mediæval conventions are broken and the old legend becomes living truth. The maiden is changed from an infant saint fleeing a vale of tears into a girl in whom the first, sweet passions of life blend into an exaltation half sexual and half religious, but pure with the purity of a great flame. The miracle, too, remains, but it is the miracle of love that subdues the despairing heart, that reconciles man to his universe and that slays the imperiousness of self. For it is when Henry's mad defiance is broken, when he has ceased to blaspheme a universe where such things can be; it is when he believes in a divine mercy which his faith can help to create—it is then that the symbolical miracle takes place. Like Job he cries out upon God for the evil that has come upon him; unlike Job he does not bow at last to a resistless power, but to a loving kindness at the core of things.

"O Hartmann, like a soulless husk of flesh,
An evil wizard's creature of dead clay,
And not God's child—fashioned of stone or brass—
This art thou till the pure ethereal stream
Of divine love has poured its living fire
Into the hull mysterious that hides
The miracle of being from our ken.
Then art thou thrilled with life! Unfettered, free,
The immortal light fulfills the mortal heart,

Radiantly breaking through thy prison's walls,
Redeeming, melting thee and all thy world
In the eternal universe of love."

The workmanship of *Henry of Auë* is probably the noblest in the neo-romantic drama. Hauptmann has not, in his verse, the brilliant eloquence of Rostand, nor the eerie sweetness of Yeats, nor the brocaded pomp of Hofmannsthal. His are a sombre glow, an austere spiritual passion, cadences that satisfy an ear accustomed to the blank-verse of the English masters. To such qualities no translation can do full justice. Yet the contrast will gain somewhat in clearness by comparing my tentative version of the confession of Chantecler with this rendering of the final lines in the vision of Ottegebe.

"Then, silent, in that dim mysterious hour,
Rising from Southward and from Northward, poured
As from a fountain, a radiant light and clear,
And from that light in one strange minute rose
Slowly two silent, alien suns that moved
Gradually higher, farther, and higher still,
Till in the zenith they became as one.
Now a great purity fell over all—
In me, about me, upon heaven and earth;
And from those constellations o'er my head
The sweet, immortal Saviour issued forth.
And a vast music sounded as of Choirs

Numberless, and the song came: *Sursum corda!*
Gloria in excelsis Deo! and last
A great and goodly voice sounded and sang:
Amen! For thy beseeching hath been heard,
And broken is the burden of his doom!"

It is not necessary to consider in detail the other neo-romantic plays of Hauptmann. Continuous perfection of workmanship, unfailing steadiness of inspiration are not notes of the Germanic genius. Neither *And Pippa Dances* (1906) nor *Charlemagne's Hostage* (1909), neither *Griselda* (1910) nor *The Bow of Odysseus* (1914), rises to the level of *The Sunken Bell* or *Henry of Auë*. Yet German criticism has been singularly ungrateful for these later pieces. To compare them to the works of lesser men is to recognise at once their elements of high and permanent beauty. Nor, in such a world as this, do we despise *Cymbeline* because it is not *Lear*, nor *Georges Dandin* because it is not *Le Misanthrope*. Gerhart Hauptmann is stricken by the shattering doubts, the searching perplexities, the vast driftings of modern life. But, such as he is, we must acknowledge him as surely the representative dramatist of our time as Shakespeare and Molière were of theirs.

Hugo von Hofmannsthal was born late enough

(1874) to escape that ardent revolution which made naturalism supreme in German letters. Keats, D'Annunzio and Swinburne were his masters, no less than the French symbolists and his Austrian fellow countryman, the eminent lyrist, Stephan George. He has himself set forth his method and his ideal in a prose as chiselled and as perfectly wrought as his verse. His criticism of naturalism is reasoned out very clearly. "These poets submerge themselves constantly in the elements of their age and seem never to rise above those elements. Their eternal surrender to their substance (and it matters so little whether that substance be of the outer world or the world of the soul) expresses something like a renunciation of all synthesis, a withdrawal of themselves, an unworthy and incomprehensible resignation." And the special power of creative artists seems to Hofmannsthal to rest in this, that "by virtue of the deep passion which impels them they can assign to each new thing its place in that orderly vision of the whole which they bear within; by virtue of that untamable passion they can bring all things into relation with each other." Hence he calls "a synthesis of the contents of his age" the indispensable achievement of the poet. And men seem to him to be athirst for such a synthesis.

"They seek in books what once they sought before fragrant altars, in the twilight of cathedrals which their yearning had taught to soar. They seek what is to unite them more powerfully than aught else with the world and at the same time take from them the world's heaviness. They seek a self, leaning upon which, their own selves may grow less disquieted. In a word, they seek all the enchantment of poetry. . . . For they would not stand shivering in their nakedness under the stars."

I quote these sayings at some length because they present the whole real case against the predominance of naturalistic art. The tragic reply to Hofmannsthal's arraignment is this: The poet cannot give a synthesis of any portion of the general life of man except under the sway of some controlling vision of the totality of things—a vision that is either clearly seen by the eye of reason or unfalteringly beheld by the eye of faith. Thus only can he "synthesise the contents of his age." But how is the modern poet to attain to such a vision for which we ask the priest, the scientist, the philosopher in vain? For the universe has grown vast and wild and untamable and we cannot snare it with the old merciful dreams! Thus the fate of the dramatic poet who divorces himself from concrete reality and aims at a synthetic dealing

with life will, usually, be either one of two things: He will either be subjective and unconsciously lyrical in the drama, or he will take refuge in an archaic vision of the world. And such has been the twofold fate of Hofmannsthal himself. In his symbolistic plays there is but one protagonist —himself, surrounded by the shadows of his projected moods. In the more sombre masterpieces of his maturity, in *Elektra* (1903) and *Ödipus und die Sphinx* (1906), he has taken refuge in an Hellenic vision of life which has its grandeur and its imperishable artistic and cultural validity, but which will never again help any soul to "hide its nakedness under the stars."

Hofmannsthal's fame was securely established by a series of symbolical dramas in one act and in verse written between 1891 and 1899. Structurally these plays can hardly be said to be dramatic at all. There is no interplay of forces; the crises are purely subjective. The characters speak past each other into the void. Nor need one, I think, be ashamed to confess that the meaning of several of these plays—*Der Kaiser und die Hexe* (1897) or *Das Bergwerk zu Falun* (1899) —quite escapes the closest attention and the completest passivity to the poet's method. But what distinguishes all these plays is their form. The

verses are like magnificent robes sweeping through corridors of porphyry and alabaster; in every fold are arduous fulness of dignity and grace. There is very little passion and no violence at all; there is the perfection of studied and learned beauty. But, indeed, all figures halt. For Hofmannsthal's contribution to literature is, closely considered, unique. We find in him a classical fulness of self-contained formal perfection embodying the dreams and marvels of the symbolist. The chiselled cup is not filled with a Falernian or a Massic vintage, but with the magic potions of romance. To that form, in itself, Hofmannsthal attributes the highest significance. "The artificer's form," to use his own words—although I translate this scrupulous and difficult poet with reluctance—

"The artificer's form
Of words that are drenched in water and in light,
Wherein I subtly weave reflected glow
Of these adventures in such ways that far
Blond boys dwelling in cities dark and hearing
Thereof, exchange in silence heavy glances,
And under burden of an undreamed-of fate
Waver like over-laden vines and whisper:
'Oh that I knew more of these deeds and dreams,
For in some wise I am woven into them,
And cannot tell where dream and life divide?' "

The boy Hofmannsthal (for since he wrote *Gestern* in 1891, he sets a new standard of precocity in the annals of literature) had quite evidently fallen under the influence of the English æsthetic movement. The ideal of Andrea, the protagonist of *Gestern*, could be perfectly expressed by the familiar lines of Wilde:

"To drift with every passion till my soul
Is a stringed lute on which all winds may play."

But already the young poet has premonitions of a maturer wisdom. For Andrea finds that the snare of yesterday is upon him and that man cannot live in the isolated moods of his moments with however "hard and gemlike a flame" they may burn.

Hofmannsthal breaks definitely with æstheticism in his most famous one act play *Der Tor und der Tod* (1893). This play has been truly called a modern *Faust* in miniature. Claudio is the modern slave of æsthetic culture; he has lived entirely through the visions of art and has rejected reality. Love and friendship have been to him but as pictures. He has grasped what seemed most precious and finds his hands and his soul empty at the last. Death reveals to him the

sacred experiences that he has missed, the fulness of life that has passed him by.

Never have Hofmannsthal's verses been more faultless or his music more enchanting than in these very early plays. He indulges himself here in the luxury of rhyme denied to some of his later plays which seek the form and meaning of beauty in the Orient (*Die Hochzeit der Sobeide*, 1899), in islands of the tropic sea (*Der weisse Fächer*, 1897), or by the shores of the Northern ocean (*Das Bergwerk zu Falun*, 1899).

Did the poet feel that his symbolism, toward 1900, was approaching an extreme tenuousness? At that period, at all events, a profound change came over the spirit of his work. He now set himself the task of re-creating—not of translating, despite his large use of existing form and substance—the older masterpieces of literature. His reinterpretation of Otway's *Venice Preserved* (*Das gerettete Venedig*, 1905) can scarcely be said to surpass the definite but moderate merit of the original. In his two masterpieces *Elektra* and *Ödipus und die Sphinx* he has employed a far higher order of imaginative power.

Hofmannsthal invites no comparison with the great Attic dramatists. His aim is different. It

is to get behind those dramatists to the wild human origins of the myths with which they deal, to the fierce and primitive and noble folk that must have antedated the Greece of immortal marbles and Sophoclean choruses. And that imaginative vision he has reconstructively grasped with an energy and tenacity that no one would have suspected from the heavy fragrance of his earlier work. The verse in these Greek plays is sinewy, bare, expressive, the mood stern yet impassioned, the dramatic rhythm sweeps along like the storms that hover over the dark forests and mysterious shrines of that pre-classical Hellenic world. What Hofmannsthal has most powerfully laid hold upon is the idea of fate, not as a literary convention, but as the immediate spiritual experience of an entire world. We shake with Clytemnestra under the shadow of her ineluctable doom; we flee with Ödipus from the oracle's certain prediction; we cower in the courtyard with Elektra under the terror of that fated revenge. The modern poetic drama has little to show that surpasses these figures and these situations in a strange gloom and massiveness of imaginative power. I venture, with a sense of its extreme inadequacy, to quote my rendering of a portion of the farewell of Ödipus to his father and mother.

The cadences are quite new in any language; in the original they have a repressed, grief-stricken hardness of music.

"Tell my father and tell my mother that once on each day
At this hour when the earth shakes with fear through all her ways,
Because night the heavy darkness on her lays,
They shall recall to their heart that their son still breathes the air,
Then will I kneel me adown somewhere,
And, when the hands of the nightwind in forests stir,
Like human breathing, heavy, oppressed,
Come visions of them to my breast.
And sometimes, though it be not each day,
A presage will come to them straight from the nightwind wild,
Which will be stirring and gently whirring by the window where they sleep;
Then are they to know that it is their child."

It is quite impossible, of course, to sum up the genius or the achievement of Hofmannsthal. The poet is in his fortieth year and the recent development in his work justifies almost any hope for his future.

V

To England the naturalistic movement came last of all. Even now, despite the great work of

John Galsworthy, it has but a precarious foothold there. Thus the time for an English neo-romanticism has hardly come. Plays in verse are written, for the old closet-drama still sustains a fitful and sequestered life. And, fifteen years ago, even good critics like Sir Sidney Colvin hailed in Stephen Phillips (b. 1868) the inaugurator of a new age of dramatic poetry. Doubtless there were very beautiful passages in the early plays of Mr. Phillips, in *Paolo and Francesca* (1899), in *Herod* (1900), even in *Ulysses* (1902). But the manner and tone of even these was derivative. The plays themselves were sustained by no native and vital energy. They were conventional, built for scenic display, empty of ideas, without depth or hardihood of character. They were the works of a poet, indeed, but of a poet whose method and style were old enough to be old-fashioned, not old enough to be ancient, and therefore strangely new and splendid. They look withered enough now just as, in another fifteen years, will look the Tennysonian exercitations of Mr. Alfred Noyes.

In those days there will come into his kingdom, late and world-worn, the most gifted and original English poet of his generation, the creator of a new blank verse and of a new lyrical music. At

the time of his tragic failure in health Arthur Symons (b. 1865) was working at two plays in verse, a *Tristran and Iseult* and a tragedy of Cornish peasant life, *The Harvesters*. But these masterpieces of the English neo-romantic drama are lost. Two dramatic fragments *Faustus and Helen* and *Otho* and *Poppæa* alone are left us, and those priceless moralities *The Dance of the Seven Sins*, *The Lover of the Queen of Sheba* and *The Fool of the World*. These have the tensely quiet, the timeless music of rhythm and thought and passion that all of Symons' work has. They do not belong, strictly speaking, to the history of the drama at all.

No, the English neo-romantic drama has not come from England; it has come from Ireland and its chief representatives are, I take it, Mr. Yeats, (b. 1865), Lady Gregory and the late John Millington Synge.

So much has recently been written of the Irish movement by people who understand it well, that I shall let my own account of it be quite brief. And I am the more impelled to such brevity by the suspicion that I look upon these Irish plays with the eyes of a stranger who, though most eager to understand and to sympathise with the latest productions of a brave and charming race, feels his

eyes dimmed by these infinite patterns in faintest green and grey and silver, and his ears dulled by the endless and endlessly subdued murmur of these

> "Old, unhappy, far-off things
> And battles long ago."

My vision is at the breaking point for a note of colour, my hearing for a tone of passion. In vain. When her beloved dies without a glance for her and Grania turns to Finn in the wild bitterness of her grief, her speech remains like an exquisite decorative pattern in style. And indeed I think it is meant to be so from two passages I find in Mr. Yeats' *Ideas of Good and Evil*. "I would like to see a poetical drama which tries to keep at a distance from daily life that it may keep its emotion untroubled, staged with but two or three colours." And further on in the same remarkable book he confesses his conviction that "the hour of convention and decoration and ceremony is coming again." Reading these sentences and thinking of Mr. Yeats' *The Shadowy Waters* (1900) or Lady Gregory's *Dervorgilla* (1907), I see that this art intentionally approaches a decoration and a ceremony, in the mystical and religious sense, and thus deliberately, from my point

of view, renounces the vitality and meaningfulness reserved for art that grows from the immediate experience of the impassioned soul. I can understand a drama that would "keep at a distance from daily life;" but a drama that would thereby "keep its emotion untroubled," that is to say the emotion (if I understand rightly) it is trying to express, is frankly lyrical or decorative and not dramatic at all.

Behind these theories of art there hovers, of course, a vision of the world. When Mr. Yeats writes,

"How shall I name you, immortal, mild, proud shadows?
I only know that all we know comes from you,
And that you come from Eden on flying feet,"

I am aware of that joy which is the perception of beauty. For this verse is like the swaying of roadside grasses and there is a faint, wild, inimitable pathos in its uncertain cadences. But, unless I stupidly misunderstand, Mr. Yeats expresses here what is to him not a sentiment but a conviction. He really believes that the legends of Celtic antiquity contain a mystic truth which is the key to the door of the world's secrets. In other words his art is based upon a vision of things which is not only unreal but, if one must be frank, puerile.

In addition, there is in Mr. Yeats' work a kind

of wild logic, like the logic of mad people. That quality may be illustrated by the play in prose *Where There Is Nothing* (1903). At the opening of the play Paul Ruttledge is overtaken, like most of us in our more illuminated moments, by a sense of the utter triviality of practical things, of possessions and conventions and laws. So he joins the tinkers and there is some very excellent description of the roadside life. Interesting, too, and humorous is the trial of the Christians in the fourth act, though it is based upon an obviously unfair assumption. But Paul is unaccustomed to exposure and must leave the road to take refuge in a monastery. Here he develops his early rebellion against a worldly and materialistic life into a heresy for which he and his adherents are driven out. And the apparently logical but quite mad conclusions to which he has come, are summed up thus: "We must destroy all that has law and number!" "Where there is nothing, there is God!" Now it is obvious that law, in the sense of natural law, and number, do not inhere in things at all, but are the human mind's really very mysterious way of dealing with things and subduing them into order and helpfulness. You cannot destroy law by destroying things, but only by destroying physicists; you cannot destroy

number except by destroying mathematicians. In brief, Mr. Yeats not only believes like a child, he also reasons like a child. And that is bound to vitiate a work of art the main business of which is to reason about life and things.

Mr. Yeats' plays in verse are always sustained as literature, if not as drama, by the enchanting beauty of their medium, by that "speech, delighted with its own music," though even here one often yearns for emphasis, concentration, density. Some of these plays, moreover, are no less exquisite for their meaning than for their form. I am not thinking of *The Countess Cathleen* (1899) which carries but a commonplace moral in the end, but of *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894) in which the old Pagan world of visible charm and brightness and beauty captures the Irish lass, and pre-eminently of that pregnant poem *The King's Threshold* (1903) with its fine protest against the least compromise on the supreme and eternal issues; with its great reply of the poet Seanchan to his beloved:

> "If I had eaten when you bid me, sweetheart,
> The kiss of multitudes in time to come
> Had been the poorer;"

and with its brave emphasis upon the arts which are the light of the world:

"Comparing them to venerable things
God gave to men before he gave them wheat."

In these plays Mr. Yeats has seen "the world as imagination sees it" and that, indeed, as he says, is "the durable world." But very often he and his fellow workers in the Irish movement have described a world which only their very special kind of imagination has seen at all, and it is then that their art seems fragile and evanescent and a little empty.

In the plays of Lady Gregory the impression of merely decorative art is most marked. And the reason I take to be this: These plays are not symbolical. They are "folk and history" plays, and are supposed to move us by their humanity, by creatures of flesh and blood acting or suffering in some way. But they are removed into utter remoteness by an indescribable detachment of action and gesture and by the unvaried modulations in the prose of the dialogue. That monotony is not base or careless; it is carefully studied. But the effects of hundreds of pages of it on one mind at least are terrible. It hurts the eyes of the mind as unendurably as the eyes of the body would be hurt if you passed in front of them thousands of yards of Irish lace of the same pattern. The

rawest melodrama is like balm after this exquisitely conscientious art.

But has not the Irish movement, indeed, lost all vision of reality? The late J. M. Synge (1871–1909) for instance, in his preface to *The Tinker's Wedding* (1907) sharply condemns the modern "analysts and their problems," and contrasts with their work "the best plays of Ben Jonson and Molière which can no more go out of fashion than the blackberries on the hedges." Now Molière analysed all the problems of his time—pedantry and snobbishness and quackery and hypocrisy in religion and in manners and in intellectual things, just as the moderns analyse marriage and poverty and justice. And though the scholar can reconstruct an adumbration of the kind of pleasure that Ben Jonson's plays must once have given, they are, in the deep and emphatic sense of Synge, thoroughly out of fashion, and far more resemble half-obliterated paintings than blackberries.

Thus it would be curious to inquire of unsophisticated and sensible Irish people whether they accept *The Tinker's Wedding* and especially *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907) with its perfectly amazing central incident (all the more amazing and unnatural if it is meant to be funny)

as representative of the Irish life they know. It is not necessary to ask any such question concerning *Riders to the Sea* (1904). The play is a one-act tragedy, thoroughly naturalistic in structure and method, human in every fibre, ending upon a note of almost intolerable pathos in Maurya's relief that the sea, having taken the last of her sons, can do her no more hurt.

If this account of the Irish movement seems not only unduly brief, but hopelessly inadequate, I can only plead that its world is one to which—with such obvious and splendid exceptions as *The King's Threshold* and *Riders to the Sea*—no previous experience of literature or life seems to give me an entrance or the power of being intellectually at home. In those rarefied regions of a sere and fluttering beauty I seem to hear the echo of that pathetic sentence quoted by Matthew Arnold in his lectures on *The Study of Celtic Literature:*

"They went forth to battle, but they always fell. . . ."

VI

The success of the neo-romantic movement in modern literature has been in its revival of the poetic spirit and in its liberation of art from the dull fetters of positivistic conceptions. It differs

from the romantic movement of the early nineteenth century by the soundness of its psychology and the firmness of its structural forms. And these two qualities it owes to the great presence and discipline of naturalistic art. But it is these very qualities that helped it to overcome the mere lyricism of romance and lay hold upon the art of the theatre. No earlier romanticism ever succeeded in doing that. For the drama, however poetical in form, is nothing without a solid and fundamental correspondence to the stuff of which human life is made. Such a correspondence, as well as poetry of notable greatness, is to be found in *Henry of Auë*, in *Chantecler*, in *Elektra*, in *The King's Threshold*. The romantic revolt of an earlier period has no drama that can be placed beside these works.

The failure of the neo-romantic movement is due to the greatness of its ambitions. It has tried, in many instances, to give a synthetic interpretation of its age, and it has not had—as I attempted to point out—any vision of the sum of things in the light of which to give that interpretation. Is that failure necessarily permanent? I think not. We will never again, perhaps, in Western civilisation, attain the spiritual assurance of the past. We cannot divest ourselves of that knowledge

which makes the ultimate problems of such heart-breaking difficulty and complexity. But sooner or later—not I am sure, in the direction of Pragmatism—but in the direction of such a reinterpretation of man's historic life and the real values of that life, as Eucken has offered, we may attain the goal of a calmer heart, a less distracted mind. It is then that the neo-romantic poet, assured of the permanence of a few values, will be able to synthesise the life of free personalities in a free world, and surpass our immediate contemporaries whose poetic activity has had to be, so largely, a reaction against false gods rather than the unfettered creation of new and fairer ones.

STUDY LISTS

STUDY LISTS

A

THE REPRESENTATIVE WORKS OF THE MODERN DRAMA

GROUP I

(Illustrating the Foundations of the Modern Drama.)

Ibsen: *Ghosts*—1881.
Ibsen: *The Lady from the Sea*—1888.
Strindberg: *Comrades*—1888.
Zola: *Thérèse Raquin*—1873.
Becque: *Les Corbeaux*—1882.

GROUP II

(Illustrating the Realistic Drama in France.)

Curel: *Les Fossiles*—1892.
Porto-Riche: *Amoureuse*—1891.
Lavedan: *Viveurs*—1895.
Brieux: *Le Berceau*—1898.
Brieux: *Les Hannetons*—1906.
Hervieu: *La Course du Flambeau*—1901.
Hervieu: *Connais-toi*—1909.
Lemaître: *Le Pardon*—1895.
Donnay: *Amants*—1895.

GROUP III

(Illustrating the Naturalistic Drama in Germany.)

Hauptmann: *The Weavers*—1892.

Hauptmann: *Michael Kramer*—1900.
Hauptmann: *Rose Bernd*—1903.
Sudermann: *Die Schmetterlingsschlacht*—1895.
Halbe: *Jugend*—1893.
Hirschfeld: *Agnes Jordan*—1898.
Hartleben: *Hanna Jagert*—1893.
Wedekind: *Frühlings Erwachen*—1894.
Schnitzler: *Liebelei*—1894.
Schnitzler: *Der einsame Weg*—1903.

GROUP IV

(Illustrating the Renaissance of the English Drama.)

Wilde: *An Ideal Husband*—1895.
Pinero: *The Thunderbolt*—1910.
Shaw: *Candida*—1894.
Shaw: *Man and Superman*—1903.
Galsworthy: *Strife*—1909.
Galsworthy: *The Eldest Son*—1909.
Barker: *The Madras House*—1909.

GROUP V

(Illustrating the Neo-Romantic Movement in the Modern Drama.)

Maeterlinck: *Les Aveugles*—1890.
Maeterlinck: *Intérieur*—1890.
Rostand: *Cyrano de Bergerac*—1897.
Rostand: *Chantecler*—1910.
Hauptmann: *The Sunken Bell*—1896.
Hauptmann: *Henry of Auë*—1903.
Hofmannsthal: *Der Tor und der Tod*—1893.
Hofmannsthal: *Ödipus und die Sphinx*—1906.
Yeats: *The Land of Heart's Desire*—1894.
Yeats: *The King's Threshold*—1903.

B

THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE MODERN DRAMA

GROUP I

Plays dealing with Poverty and Social Justice.

Becque: *Les Corbeaux*
Brieux: *Blanchette*
Brieux: *La Robe rouge*
Hauptmann: *The Weavers*
Hauptmann: *Rose Bernd*
Sudermann: *Stein unter Steinen*
Schnitzler: *Das Vermächtnis*
Hartleben: *Hanna Jagert*
Galsworthy: *The Silver Box*
Galsworthy: *Strife*
Galsworthy: *Justice*
Galsworthy: *The Pigeon*

GROUP II

Plays dealing with Marriage and Divorce.

Ibsen: *A Doll's House*
Strindberg: *Comrades*
Strindberg: *The Link*
Porto-Riche: *Amoureuse*
Brieux: *Le Berceau*
Hervieu: *Les Tenailles*
Hervieu: *Le Loi de l'homme*
Hervieu: *Le Dédale*
Hervieu: *Le Réveil*
Hervieu: *Connais-toi*

Lemaître: *Le Pardon*
Sudermann: *Das Glück im Winkel*
Halbe: *Mutter Erde*
Hirschfeld: *Zu Hause*
Hartleben: *Die Erziehung zur Ehe*
Pinero: *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*
Shaw: *Getting Married*
Shaw: *Candida*
Galsworthy: *The Fugitive*

GROUP III

Plays dealing with Sex.

Ibsen: *Ghosts*
Björnson: *A Gauntlet*
Brieux: *The Three Daughters of M. Dupont*
Brieux: *La petite Amie*
Brieux: *Damaged Goods*
Brieux: *Maternity*
Donnay: *L'Autre Danger*
Hauptmann: *Gabriel Schilling's Flight*
Halbe: *Jugend*
Schnitzler: *Anatol*
Schnitzler: *Das Märchen*
Schnitzler: *Liebelei*
Wedekind: *Frühlings Erwachen*
Shaw: *Man and Superman*
Barker: *Waste*
Barker: *The Madras House*

GROUP IV

Plays Dealing with the Life of Art.

Hauptmann: *The Sunken Bell*

Hauptmann: *Michael Kramer*
Hirschfeld: *Die Mütter*
Hirschfeld: *Der junge Goldner*
Schnitzler: *Literatur*
Hofmannsthal: *Der Tod des Tizian*
Yeats: *The King's Threshold*

GROUP V

Plays Dealing with the Life of Faith and of the Intellect.

Ibsen: *Rosmersholm*
Björnson: *Beyond Our Strength*
Brieux: *La Foi*
Hauptmann: *Henry of Auë*
Halbe: *Das tausendjährige Reich*
Maeterlinck: *Les Aveugles*
Rostand: *Chantecler*
Hofmannsthal: *Der Tor und der Tod*

C

THE UNITIES IN THE MODERN DRAMA

GROUP I

Plays Observing the Unity of Place

Ibsen: *The Pillars of Society*
Ibsen: *Hedda Gabler*
Zola: *Thérèse Raquin*
Becque: *La Parisienne*
De Maupassant: *La Paix du Ménage*
Curel: *L'Envers d'une Sainte*
Curel: *Le Coup d'Aile*
Porto-Riche: *Amoureuse*

Brieux: *Blanchette*
Brieux: *Le Berceau*
Brieux: *Les Hannetons*
Hervieu: *Connais-toi*
Lemaître: *Le Pardon*
Holz: *Die Familie Selicke*
Schlaf: *Meister Oelze*
Hauptmann: *Lonely Lives*
Hauptmann: *Drayman Henschel*
Sudermann: *Heimat*
Sudermann: *Johannisfeuer*
Halbe: *Jugend*
Dreyer: *Drei*
Dreyer: *Winterschlaf*
Rosmer: *Dämmerung*
Schnitzler: *Das Vermächtnis*
Schnitzler: *Zwischenspiel*
Hartleben: *Angele*
Jones: *The Triumph of the Philistines*
Galsworthy: *The Pigeon*

GROUP II

Plays Observing the Unities of Time and Place.

Ibsen: *Ghosts*
Ibsen: *A Doll's House*
Strindberg: *The Father*
Strindberg: *Comrades*
Strindberg: *Miss Julia*
Strindberg: *Creditors*
Strindberg: *The Link*
Hervieu: *L'Énigme*
Hauptmann: *The Reconciliation*

Halbe: *Der Strom*
Shaw: *Candida*

(Mr. Galsworthy's *Strife* observes the unity of time but not of place.)

CRITICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE MODERN DRAMA

CRITICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE MODERN DRAMA

THE following bibliography lays no claim to the barren virtue of mere completeness on the side of biography and criticism. Those works have been selected which seemed most excellent and authoritative. I have made every effort, on the other hand, to give in the order of their first appearance in any form the works of all the playwrights discussed in the text and a full list of the existing English translations of foreign plays. Except in the case of Rostand, however, I have not held it necessary to give several versions of the same play.

In so considerable an array of names and dates dealing with a contemporary subject, omissions and inaccuracies—the latter due sometimes to disagreement among my authorities—will necessarily be found. I shall be grateful to any student of the subject for corrections and additions. It is obvious that, except in the case of Chapter Three, no bibliographical notes could be given for the opening section on each chapter. Hence, in order

that the divisions of the bibliography may correspond to those in the text, the bibliographical material belonging to Chapters One, Two, Four and Five begins with Section II.

It is a noteworthy fact that of the seven books dealing with the modern drama in its international aspect all but one—that of Ashley Dukes—are of American origin. The seven books are: Edward Everett Hale, *Dramatists of To-day* (1905), James Huneker, *Iconoclasts: A Book of Dramatists* (1905), Ashley Dukes, *Modern Dramatists* (1911), Archibald Henderson, *European Dramatists* (1913), Barrett H. Clark, *The Continental Drama of To-day* (1914), Archibald Henderson, *The Changing Drama* (1914), Frank Wadleigh Chandler, *Aspects of Modern Drama* (1914). These books vary remarkably in quality and range. The important point for us, however, is that the volumes of Hale, Huneker and Dukes consist of desultory essays, studies and even notes. There is in them no attempt to grasp the subject as a whole or to give any reasoned account of it. It is otherwise with Professor Henderson's *The Changing Drama* and Professor Chandler's *Aspects of Modern Drama.* But in these books, too, the method is not historical and

the authors' accounts are given according to kinds and tendencies, or in Professor Chandler's words "dramatic kinds and moods," and not at all according to the men and their works in historical order, national groupings and against the background of contemporary thought. Mr. Clark's volume is one of synopses and bibliographies. The latter, though not always accurate, are extremely useful and I must acknowledge my indebtedness to them for calling my attention to several English versions of foreign plays which I might else have overlooked.

NOTE.—I have become much indebted, in the course of writing this bibliography, to Miss Maud Jeffrey of the Ohio State University Library, and to the libraries of the Universities of Illinois, Chicago and Wisconsin.

CHAPTER ONE

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE MODERN DRAMA

II

A. HENRIK IBSEN

CRITICISM AND BIOGRAPHY: From the enormous mass of Ibsen literature a rigid selection is all that need be given. The best brief biographies are: H. Jaeger, *Henrik Ibsen, A Critical Biography* (1890), and Edmund Gosse, *Henrik Ibsen* (1908); the fullest is U. C. Wörner, *Henrik Ibsen* (2 vols. 1900). Of critical treatises may be mentioned the brilliant and sagacious study in Heinrich Bulthaupt's *Dramaturgie des Schauspiels* (vol. IV, ed. 1901), B. Litzmann, *Ibsen's Dramen* (1900), Georg Brandes, *Henrik Ibsen,—Björnstjerne Björnson* (Eng. ed. 1899) and G. B. Shaw, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (Rev. ed. 1913).

WORKS: Catalina, 1850; The Warrior's Mound, 1854; Lady Inger of Ostrat, 1855; The Feast at Solhaug, 1856; Olaf Liljekrans, 1857; The Vikings at Helgeland, 1861; Love's Comedy, 1862; The Pretenders, 1864; Brand, 1866; Peer Gynt, 1867; The League of Youth, 1869; Emperor and Galilean, 1873; The Pil-

lars of Society, 1877; A Doll's House, 1879; Ghosts, 1881; An Enemy of the People, 1882; The Wild Duck, 1884; Rosmersholm, 1886; The Lady from the Sea, 1888; Hedda Gabler, 1890; The Masterbuilder, 1892; Little Eyolf, 1894; John Gabriel Borkman, 1896; When We Dead Awaken, 1899.

TRANSLATIONS: The standard edition in English is that of the Collected Works edited by William Archer (10 vols. 1910-1912). The completest edition for the student ignorant of Norse is the great authorised German edition: *Henrik Ibsen's sämtliche Werke in deutscher Sprache. Durchgesehen und eingeleitet von* G. Brandes, J. Elias, P. Schlenther (10 vols. n.d.).

B. BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSON

CRITICISM AND BIOGRAPHY: A full but uncritical biography of Björnson exists in C. Collin, *Björnstjerne Björnson* (Germ. ed. 1903). The best brief account in English is William Morton Payne, *Björnstjerne Björnson* (1910). For criticism consult G. Brandes, *Henrik Ibsen—Björnstjerne Björnson* (Eng. ed. 1899), and his *Menschen und Werke* (2nd ed. 1895).

WORKS: Between the Battles, 1858; Lame Hulda, 1858; King Sverre, 1861; Sigurd Slembe, 1862; Mary Stuart, 1864; The Newly Married Couple, 1865; Sigurd Jorsalfar, 1872; The Editor, 1874; A Bankruptcy, 1874; The

King, 1877; Leonarda, 1879; The New System, 1879; A Gauntlet, 1883; Beyond Our Power, Part I, 1883; Geography and Love, 1885; Beyond Our Power, Part II, 1895; Paul Lange and Tora Parsberg, 1898; Laboremus, 1901; At Storhove, 1904; Daglarmet, 1904; When the New Wine Blooms, 1909.

TRANSLATIONS: The fullest English edition of Björnson is that edited by Edwin Björkman: First Series: The New System, The Gauntlet, Beyond Our Power, Part I (1913). Second Series: Love and Geography, Beyond Our Power, Part II, Laboremus (1914). Three Comedies by Björnson (Everyman's Library, 1913), edited by R. F. Sharp, contains The Newly Married Couple, Leonarda, A Gauntlet. Sigurd Slembe is translated by W. M. Payne (1910), Mary, Queen of Scots by A. Sahlberg (1912), and When the New Wine Blooms by Lee M. Holländer (Poet Lore, 1911).

C. AUGUST STRINDBERG

CRITICISM AND BIOGRAPHY: A fairly full account of Strindberg in English is to be found in L. Lind-af-Hageby, *August Strindberg* (1913). Criticism will be found in the volumes of Huneker, Dukes and Henderson and in the editorial matter of the English editions cited below.

WORKS: Hermione, 1869; The Outlaw, 1871; Master Olaf, 1872; The Secret of the Guild,

1880; Sir Bengt's Lady, 1882; The Wanderings of Lucky Per, 1883; The Father, 1887; Comrades, 1888; Miss Juliet, 1888; Creditors, 1890; Pariah, 1890; Samum, 1890; The Stronger, 1890; The Keys of Heaven, 1892; The First Warning, 1893; Debit and Credit, 1893; Mother Love, 1893; Facing Death, 1893; Playing with Fire, 1897; The Link, 1897; To Damascus, I and II, 1898; There are Crimes and Crimes, 1899; Christmas, 1899; Gustavus Vasa, 1899; Eric XIV, 1899; The Saga of the Folkungs, 1899; Gustavus Adolphus, 1900; The Dance of Death, I and II, 1901; Easter, 1901; Midsummer, 1901; Engelbrecht, 1901; Charles XII, 1901; The Crown Bride, 1902; Swanwhite, 1902; The Dream Play, 1902; Gustavus III, 1903; Queen Christina, 1903; The Nightingale of Wittenberg, 1903; To Damascus III, 1904; Storm, 1907; The Burned Lot, 1907; The Spook Sonata, 1907; The Pelican, 1907; The Slippers of Abu Casen, 1908; The Last Knight, 1908; The National Director, 1909; The Earl of Bjallbo, 1909; The Black Glove, 1909; The Great Highway, 1909.

TRANSLATIONS: A large body of Strindberg's work is accessible in English in the three volumes edited by Edwin Björkman: First Series: The Dream Play, The Link, The Dance of Death, I and II (1912). Second Series: There are Crimes and Crimes, Miss Julia, The

Stronger, Creditors, Pariah (1913). Third Series: Swanwhite, Simoom, Debit and Credit, Advent, The Thunderstorm, after the Fire (1913). Of equal importance are the two volumes edited by E. and W. Oland: Vol. I: The Father, Countess Julie, The Outlaw, The Stronger. Vol. II: Comrades, Facing Death, Pariah, Easter (1912). Lucky Pehr is translated by V. S. Howard (1912).

III

PLAYS OF THE FRENCH NOVELISTS

CRITICISM: The best account of the French drama of the mid-century, inclusive of Becque but exclusive of his successors, is probably H. Parigot, *Le Théâtre d'hier* (1893). In thorough touch with its subject is Brander Matthews' *French Dramatists of the Nineteenth Century* (1881). An invaluable summing up of the drama of Augier and Dumas *fils* is to be found in G. Lanson, *Histoire de la littérature française* (11th ed. 1909, pp. 1060-1072) and of Sarcey's theory of the theatre in the same work, pp. 1116-1118. An excellent account on a larger scale is Chapter III (*Le Théâtre*) in Vol. VIII (*Période contemporaine*) of L. Petit de Julleville's *Histoire de la langue et de la littérature française* (1899). The two volumes of Émile Zola: *Le Naturalisme au théâtre* (1881) and *Nos Auteurs dramatiques*

(1881) are of interest despite Zola's lack of critical equipment, and of capital importance are Edmond de Goncourt's *Préface* to *Henriette Maréchal* (ed. of 1885), the account in the *Journal des Goncourts* (Vol. II, pp. 261-332, ed. of 1904) and Zola's several prefaces in his *Théâtre* (ed. of 1907). Notable on the conservative side, more important in France than elsewhere, is the study *La Reforme du théâtre* in Ferdinand Brunetière, *Essais sur la littérature contemporaine* (3rd ed. 1896).

A. EDMOND and JULES DE GONCOURT

WORKS: Henriette Maréchal, 1865; La Patrie en Danger, 1868.

B. ÉMILE ZOLA

WORKS: Thérèse Raquin, 1873; Les Heritiers Rabourdin, 1874; Le Bouton de Rose, 1878.

C. ALPHONSE DAUDET

WORKS: La dernière Idole, 1862; Les Absents, 1864; L'Oellet blanc, 1865; Le Frère ainé, 1867. [These four are plays in one act.] Le Sacrifice, 1869; L'Arlésienne, 1872.

D. GUY DE MAUPASSANT

WORKS: Histoire du vieux temps, 1879; Musotte, 1891; La Paix du Menage, 1893.

IV

HENRI BECQUE

CRITICISM: Accounts of Becque's work, varying in value will be found in the books of Parigot, Huneker and Dukes. Excellent and searching critical discussions occur in Augustin Filon, *De Dumas à Rostand* (1898) and in A. Sorel, *Essais de psychologie dramatique* (1911).

WORKS: Sardanapale, 1867; L'Enfant prodigue, 1868; Michel Pauper, 1870; La Navette, 1878; Les honettes Femmes, 1880; Les Corbeaux, 1882; La Parisienne, 1885.

TRANSLATIONS: The Vultures (Les Corbeaux), The Woman of Paris (La Parisienne) and The Merry-Go-Round (La Navette) have been translated by Freeman Tilden. (The Modern Drama Series, 1913.)

V

THE NEW STAGES

For the founding and character of *Le Théâtre libre* consult A. Thalasso, *Le Théâtre Libre* and Filon, *op. cit.* The origin of *Die Freie Bühne* is discussed by one of its founders in Paul Schlenther, *Wozu der Lärm? Genesis der Freien Bühne* (1889), and fully described by an eye-witness in A. von Hanstein, *Das jüngste Deutschland* (1901). (Cf. especially Book IV, Chapters III, IV, and V.)

CHAPTER TWO

THE REALISTIC DRAMA IN FRANCE

An admirable critical literature has already grown up about the contemporary theatre in France. The basic work is the great *Impressions de théâtre* (10 vols. 1888 ff.) of Jules Lemaître. A brief summing up of the whole movement is found in G. Lanson's *Histoire de la littérature française* (11th ed. 1909), pp. 1122–1127, and an equally excellent one on a larger scale in Georges Pelissier's *Le Mouvement littéraire contemporain* (Chapter II, *Le Théâtre*, 1901). Consult also Petit de Julleville, *Histoire de la langue et de la littérature française. Loc. cit.* Highly suggestive, though somewhat desultory, are René Doumic, *De Scribe à Ibsen* (1901) and again, Augustin Filon, *De Dumas à Rostand* (1898). Excellent for a detailed understanding of the period is Henry Bordeaux, *La Vie au Théâtre* (3 vols. 1910–1913). More systematic and, indeed, invaluable are: René Doumic, *Le Théâtre nouveau* (1908), dealing with Hervieu,

Lavedan, Lemaître, Curel, Brieux, Donnay; A. Sorel, *Essais de psychologie dramatique* (1911), dealing with the same playwrights and also with Becque and Porto-Riche, and Paul Flat, *Figures du théâtre contemporain* (2 vols. 1912–13), discussing the same group minus Becque and Lavedan but including several of the neo-romantics. Studies of Brieux and Hervieu may also be found in Dukes and Huneker, and of Brieux in the editorial matter of the English editions cited below.

II

A. GEORGES DE PORTO-RICHE

WORKS: La Chance de Françoise, 1889; L'Infidèle, 1890; Amoureuse, 1891; Le Passé, 1902; Le vieil Homme, 1911.

TRANSLATIONS: Françoise' Luck (La Chance de Françoise) in Barrett H. Clark's Four Plays by Curel, etc. (1914).

B. FRANÇOIS DE CUREL

WORKS: L'Envers d'une Sainte, 1892; Les Fossiles, 1892; L'Invitée, 1893; L'Amour brode, 1893; La nouvelle Idole, 1895; La Figurante, 1896; Le Repas du Lion, 1897; La Fille sauvage, 1902; Le Coup d'aile, 1906.

TRANSLATIONS: The Beat of a Wing (Le Coup d'aile), translated by Alice Van Kaath-

oven (Poet Lore), 1909. The Fossils (Les Fossiles) in Barrett H. Clark's Four Plays by Curel, etc. (1914).

III

HENRI LAVEDAN

WORKS: Une Famille, 1890; Le Prince d'Aurec, 1892; Les deux Noblesses, 1894; Viveurs, 1895; Catherine, 1898; Le nouveau Jeu, 1898; Le vieux Marcheur, 1899; Le Marquis de Priola, 1902; Le Duel, 1905; Sire, 1909; Le Goût du Vice, 1911; Servir, 1913.
TRANSLATIONS: Le Prince d'Aurec is translated by B. H. Clark in Three Modern Plays from the French, 1914.

IV

A. EUGÈNE BRIEUX

WORKS: Ménages d'Artistes, 1890; Blanchette, 1892; La Couvée, 1894; L'Engrénage, 1894; Les Bienfaiteurs, 1896; L'Évasion, 1896; Le Berceau, 1898; Resultats des Courses, 1898; Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont, 1899; La Robe rouge, 1900; Les Remplaçantes, 1901; Les Avariés, 1902; La petite Ami, 1902; Maternité, 1904; Les Hannetons, 1906; La Française, 1907; Simone, 1908; Suzette, 1909; La Foi, 1910; La Femme seule, 1912.
TRANSLATIONS: Two volumes of Brieux' plays translated by various hands and vigor-

ously edited by George Bernard Shaw have appeared. Vol. I (1911), contains: The Three Daughters of M. Dupont, Damaged Goods (Les Avariés) and Maternity. Vol. II (1914), contains The Red Robe (La Robe rouge), The Independent Woman (La Femme seule) and Faith (La Foi). In addition Blanchette and The Escape (L'Évasion) have appeared in English with a judicious preface by H. L. Mencken (1913).

B. PAUL HERVIEU

WORKS: Les Paroles restent, 1892; Les Tenailles, 1895; La Loi de l'Homme, 1897; L'Énigme, 1901; La Course du Flambeau, 1901; Théroigne de Méricourt, 1902; Le Dédale, 1903; Le Reveil, 1905; Modestie, 1908; Connais-toi, 1909; Bagatelle, 1912.

TRANSLATIONS: The Labyrinth (Le Dédale) has been translated with good biographical and bibliographical notes by B. H. Clark and L. MacClintock, 1913; Modesty (one act) by B. H. Clark, 1913, and In Chains (Les Tenailles) by Ysidor Asckenasy (Poet Lore), 1909.

V

A. JULES LEMAÎTRE

WORKS: Révoltée, 1889; Le Deputé Leveau, 1890; Mariage blanc, 1891; Flipote, 1893; Les Rois, 1893; L'Age difficile, 1895; Le Pardon,

1895; La bonne Hélène, 1896; L'Ainée, 1898; La Massière, 1905; Bertrade, 1906.

TRANSLATIONS: The Pardon is translated by B. H. Clark in Three Modern Plays from the French (1914).

B. MAURICE DONNAY

WORKS: Lysistrata, 1892; Folle Entreprise, 1894; Amants, 1895; La Douloureuse, 1897; L'Affranchie, 1898; Georgette Lemeunier, 1898; Le Torrent, 1899; Éducation de Prince, 1900; La Bascule, 1901; L'autre Danger, 1902; Le Retour de Jerusalem, 1902; L'Escalade, 1904; Paraître, 1906; La Patronne, 1908; Le Ménage de Molière, 1912; Les Éclaireuses, 1913.

TRANSLATIONS: The Other Danger (L'autre Danger) is translated by Charlotte T. David in Three Modern Plays from the French (1914).

CHAPTER THREE

THE NATURALISTIC DRAMA IN GERMANY

The best book on all phases of modern German literature is the lamented Richard Moritz Meyer's *Die deutsche Literatur des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (4th ed. 1910). It contains a full treatment of the modern drama. Of little critical value but packed with useful information is F. Kummer's *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (1909). A good manual exists in Georg Witkowski's *Das deutsche Drama des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (2nd ed. 1906; Eng. ed. 1909). S. Friedmann's *Das deutsche Drama des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts, Neuere und neuste Zeit* (11th ed. 1904), is sound and trustworthy for the playwrights discussed. Edgar Steiger's *Das Werden des neueren Dramas* (2 vols. 1903) is subtle and suggestive but highly personal. Admirable though somewhat antiquated now is Berthold Litzmann's *Das deutsche Drama in den literarischen Bewegungen der Gegenwart* (4th ed. 1897). The best book on the

modern drama in any language is Robert F. Arnold's *Das moderne Drama* (1908). The author combines exhaustive learning with fine critical taste and great charm of style. Although he avowedly stresses the German drama, he treats every modern playwright of note. No one can work in this field without becoming deeply indebted to Arnold. A delightful personal commentary on the whole German movement will be found in Adalbert von Hanstein's *Das jüngste Deutschland* (1901). Discussions of individual playwrights, especially of Hauptmann and Sudermann, occur in many collections of studies. A few of these may be mentioned: Georg Brandes, *Menschen und Werke* (2nd ed. 1895); Heinrich Bulthaupt, *Dramaturgie des Schauspiels* (vol. IV, 1901); Moeller van den Bruck, *Die Zeitgenossen* (1906); Kuno Francke, *Glimpses of Modern German Culture* (1898); Otto Heller, *Studies in Modern German Literature* (1905).

I

A. ARNO HOLZ and JOHANNES SCHLAF

WORKS: Die Familie Selicke, 1890.

B. ARNO HOLZ

WORKS: Sozialaristokraten, 1896; Traumulus (with O. Jerschke), 1904.

C. JOHANNES SCHLAF

WORKS: Meister Oelze, 1892; Gertrud, 1898; Die Feindlichen, 1899; Weigand, 1906.

II

GERHART HAUPTMANN

CRITICISM AND BIOGRAPHY: The best-known monographs on Hauptmann are Paul Schlenther's *Gerhart Hauptmann, Sein Lebensgang und seine Dichtung* (*Neue gänzlich umgearbeitete Ausgabe*, 6th ed. 1912), and Adolf Bartel's *Gerhart Hauptmann* (2nd ed. 1906). The first is authoritative; the second, like all of Bartel's writings, is to be viewed with extreme suspicion. Briefer volumes are: Karl Holl, *Gerhart Hauptmann* (Eng. ed. 1913), E. Sulger-Gebing, *Gerhart Hauptmann* (1909), A. von Hanstein, *Gerhart Hauptmann* (1898) and U. C. Wörner, *Gerhart Hauptmann* (2nd ed. 1901). A very elaborate analysis of all the plays exists in Kurt Sternberg's *Gerhart Hauptmann, Der Entwicklungsgang seiner Dichtungen* (1910). Criticism of Hauptmann is found in all the works on modern German literature cited above, as well as in the volumes of Huneker, Dukes, Hale, Henderson, Chandler and in the introductions to the English edition cited below.

WORKS: Vor Sonnenaufgang, 1889; Das Friedensfest, 1890; Einsame Menschen, 1891;

Die Weber, 1892; College Crampton, 1892; Der Biberpelz, 1893; Hannele, 1893; Florian Geyer, 1896; Die versunkene Glocke, 1896; Fuhrmann Henschel, 1898; Schluck und Jau, 1899; Michael Kramer, 1900; Der rote Hahn, 1901; Der arme Heinrich, 1902; Rose Bernd, 1903; Elga, 1905; Die Jungfern vom Bischofsberg, 1907; Kaiser Karls Geisel, 1908; Griselda, 1909; Die Ratten, 1911; Gabriel Schillings Flucht, 1912; Festspiel, 1913; Der Bogen des Odysseus, 1914.

TRANSLATIONS: The dramatic Works of Gerhart Hauptmann (1912-1915), edited and chiefly translated by Ludwig Lewisohn, now extends to five volumes. The sixth volume, to be issued shortly, includes the later plays in prose. A seventh volume will include the later plays in verse. It is the aim of this edition to make Hauptmann as accessible as Ibsen to the English reading public.

III

HERMANN SUDERMANN

WORKS: Die Ehre, 1889; Sodoms Ende, 1891; Heimat, 1893; Die Schmetterlingsschlacht, 1895; Das Glück im Winckel, 1896; Morituri (Teja, Fritzchen, Das ewig Männliche), 1897; Johannes, 1898; Die drei Reiherfedern, 1899; Johannesfeuer, 1900; Es lebe das Leben, 1902; Der Sturmgeselle Sokrates, 1903; Stein unter

Steinen, 1905; Das Blumenboot, 1905; Rosen (Die Lichtstreifen, Margot, Der letzte Besuch, Die ferne Prinzessin), 1907; Strandkinder, 1910; Der Bettler von Syrakus, 1911; Der gute Ruf, 1912.

TRANSLATIONS: Magda (Heimat) is translated by C. E. A. Winslow (1895), John the Baptist (Johannes) by Beatrice Marshall (1908), The Three Heron's Feathers (Die drei Reiherfedern), by Helen T. Porter (Poet Lore; in prose (!) 1900), The Fires of St. John (Johannesfeuer), by Charles Swickard (1904), The Joy of Living (Es lebe das Leben), by Edith Wharton (1903), Roses (Rosen), by Grace Frank (1909) and Morituri, by Archibald Alexander (1910).

IV

A. MAX HALBE

WORKS: Ein Emporkömmling, 1889; Freie Liebe, 1890; Eisgang, 1892; Jugend, 1893; Der Amerikafahrer, 1894; Lebenswende, 1896; Mutter Erde, 1897; Der Eroberer, 1899; Die Heimatlosen, 1899; Das tausendjährige Reich, 1900; Haus Rosenhagen, 1901; Walpurgisnacht, 1903; Der Strom, 1904; Die Insel der Seligen, 1906; Das wahre Gesicht, 1907; Blaue Berge, 1909; Der Ring des Gauklers, 1912; Freiheit, 1914.

TRANSLATIONS: The Rosenhagens (Haus Ro-

senhagen), translated by Paul H. Grumann (Poet Lore, 1910).

B. GEORG HIRSCHFELD

WORKS: Zu Hause, 1896; Die Mütter, 1896; Agnes Jordan, 1898; Pauline, 1899; Der junge Goldner, 1901; Der Weg zum Licht, 1902; Nebeneinander, 1904; Spätfrühling, 1906; Mieze und Maria, 1907; Das zweite Leben, 1910.

C. MAX DREYER

WORKS: Drei, 1892; Winterschlaf, 1895; Eine, 1896; In Behandlung, 1897; Grossmama, 1897; Liebesträume, Hans, Unter blonden Bestien, all 1898; Der Probekandidat, 1899; Der Sieger, 1900; Schelmenspiele, 1901; Stichwahl, 1902; Das Tal des Lebens, 1902; Die Siebzehnjährigen, 1904; Venus Amathusia, 1905; Die Hochzeitsfackel, 1906; Des Pfarrers Tochter von Streladorf, 1909; Der lächelnde Knabe, 1911; Die Frau Des Kommandeurs, 1912; Der grünende Zweig, 1913.

V

A. OTTO ERICH HARTLEBEN

WORKS: Der Frosch, 1889; Angele, 1891; Hanna Jagert, 1893; Die Erziehung zur Ehe, 1893; Ein Ehrenwort, 1894; Die sittliche Forderung, 1897; Die Befreiten, 1898; Ein wahrhaft guter Mensch, 1899; Rosenmontag, 1901;

Im grünen Baum zur Nachtigal, 1905; Diogenes, 1905.

TRANSLATIONS: Hanna Jagert, translated by Sarah E. Holmes (Poet Lore, 1913).

B. FRANK WEDEKIND

WORKS: Frühlings Erwachen, 1891; Erdgeist, 1895; Der Liebestrank, 1899; Der Kammersänger, 1900; Marquis von Keith, 1900; Die Büchse der Pandora, 1903; Hidalla, 1904; Totentanz, 1906; Musik, 1907; So ist das Leben, 1907; Die Zensur, 1908; Oaha, 1908; Der Stein der Weisen, 1909; In allen Sätteln gerecht, 1910; Mit allen Hunden gehetzt, 1910; In allen Wassern gewaschen, 1910; Franziska, 1912.

TRANSLATIONS: The Awakening of Spring (Frühlings Erwachen) is translated by F. J. Ziegler (1910), The Heart of the Tenor (Der Kammersänger) is adapted by André Tridon (Smart Set, 1913), and Such is Life (So ist das Leben) is translated by F. J. Ziegler (1912).

VI

ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

WORKS: Anatol, 1889; Das Märchen, 1891; Liebelei, 1894; Freiwild, 1896; Das Vermächtnis, 1897; Der grüne Kakadu (Der grüne Kakadu, Paracelsus, Die Gefährtin), 1898; Der Schleier der Beatrice, 1899; Lebendige Stunden

(Lebendige Stunden, Die Frau mit dem Dolche, Die letzten Masken, Literatur), 1901; Der einsame Weg, 1903; Zwischenspiel, 1904; Marionetten (Der Puppenspieler, Der tapfere Cassian, Zum grossen Wurstel), 1904; Der Ruf des Lebens, 1905; Komtesse Mizzi, 1909; Der junge Medardus, 1909; Das weite Land, 1910; Professor Bernhardi, 1912.

TRANSLATIONS: Anatol has been gracefully adapted by Granville Barker. Light o' Love (Liebelei) is translated by B. Q. Morgan (The Drama, 1912); The Green Cockatoo, Paracelsus and The Mate, by H. B. Samuel (1913); The Legacy (Das Vermächtnis), by Mary L. Stephenson (Poet Lore, 1911); The Lady with the Dagger (Die Frau mit dem Dolche), by Helen T. Porter (Poet Lore, 1904), and Living Hours (Lebendige Stunden), by the same (Poet Lore, 1906). The Lonely Way, Interlude and Countess Mizzi (Der einsame, Weg, Zwischenspiel, Komtesse Mizzi) translated by Edwin Björkman form a volume in the Modern Drama Series (1914), and Professor Bernhardi appears in a much abbreviated and badly disfigured version by Mrs. Emil Pohli (1913).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RENAISSANCE OF THE ENGLISH DRAMA

Owing partly to the recent appearance of a modern movement in the English drama and partly to the unfortunate tradition which, in England and America, denies living artists and their audiences the benefit of serious criticism, no satisfactory account of the subject matter of this chapter has hitherto been written. Mario Borsa's *The English Stage of To-day* (1908) suffers from its foreign authorship. So does Augustin Filon's *The English Stage* (1897). The latter volume, in addition, was written before the modern theatre had produced its more notable work. The two volumes of Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, *The Renascence of the English Drama* (1895) and *The Foundations of a National Drama* (1913) betray on every page their author's abiding intellectual immaturity and his dedication to outworn theatricalism. The soundest work on the modern drama in England is to be found in sev-

eral collections of theatrical criticism. In these briefer or longer reviews one may find an intelligent, sometimes a brilliant and acute commentary on the recent development of the English theatre. The volumes in question are: William Archer, *The Theatrical World* (5 vols. 1893–1897); George Bernard Shaw, *Dramatic Opinions and Essays* (2 vols. 1906); C. E. Montague, *Dramatic Values* (1911); A. B. Walkley, *The Drama and Life* (1911).

II

A. HENRY ARTHUR JONES

WORKS: A Clerical Error, 1879; The Silver King, 1882; Saints and Sinners, 1884; The Middleman, 1889; Judah, 1890; The Dancing Girl, 1891; The Crusaders, 1891; The Bauble Shop, 1893; The Tempter, 1893; The Masqueraders, 1894; The Case of Rebellious Susan, 1894; The Triumph of the Philistines, 1895; Michael and His Lost Angel, 1896; The Rogue's Comedy, 1896; The Physician, 1897; The Liars, 1897; The Manœuvres of Jane, 1898; Carnac Sahib, 1899; The Lackay's Carnival, 1900; Mrs. Dane's Defence, 1900; The Princess' Nose, 1902; Chance, 1902; The Idol, 1902; The Whitewashing of Julia, 1903; Joseph Entangled, 1904; The Chevalier, 1904; The Heroic Stubbs, 1906; The Hypocrites,

1906; The Evangelist, 1907; Dolly Reforms Herself, 1908; The Knife, 1909; We Can't Be As Bad As All That, 1910; The Fall in Rookies, 1910; The Ogre, 1911; The Divine Gift, 1913; Mary Goes First, 1913; The Lie, 1914.

B. ARTHUR WING PINERO

WORKS: Two Hundred a Year, 1877; Daisy's Escape, 1879; Hester's Mystery, 1880; Bygones, 1880; The Money Spinner, 1880; Imprudence, 1881; The Squire, 1881; The Rector, 1882; The Rocket, 1883; Lords and Commons, 1883; Low Water, 1884; The Weaker Sex, 1884; The Magistrate, 1885; The Schoolmistress, 1886; The Hobby-Horse, 1886; Dandy Dick, 1887; Sweet Lavender, 1888; The Profligate, 1889; The Cabinet Minister, 1890; Lady Bountiful, 1891; The Times, 1891; The Amazons, 1893; The Second Mrs. Tanqueray, 1893; The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith, 1895; The Benefit of the Doubt, 1895; The Princess and the Butterfly, 1897; Trelawney of the Wells, 1898; The Gay Lord Quex, 1899; Iris, 1901; Letty, 1903; A Wife without a Smile, 1904; His House in Order, 1906; The Thunderbolt, 1908; Mid-Channel, 1909; Preserving Mr. Panmure, 1911; The "Mind the Paint" Girl, 1912; The Widow of Wasdale Head, 1912.

III

OSCAR WILDE

WORKS: Vera, 1882; The Duchess of Padua, 1891; Lady Windermere's Fan, 1892; A Woman of No Importance, 1893; Salome: Drame en un acte, 1893; The Ideal Husband, 1895; The Importance of Being Earnest, 1895.

IV

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

CRITICISM AND BIOGRAPHY: Archibald Henderson's *George Bernard Shaw: His Life and Works* (1911), is interesting and valuable; Gilbert K. Chesterton's *George Bernard Shaw* (1910), is brilliant and suggestive, but essentially uncritical and polemic. Notable is Joseph McCabe's *George Bernard Shaw: A Critical Study* (1914).

WORKS: Widowers' Houses, 1892; The Philanderer, 1893; Mrs. Warren's Profession, 1893; Arms and the Man, 1894; Candida, 1894; The Man of Destiny, 1895; You Never Can Tell, 1896. (These seven plays compose the two volumes of Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant, 1898.) The Devil's Disciple, 1897; Cæsar and Cleopatra, 1898; Captain Brassbound's Conversion, 1899. (These three plays compose the volume: Three Plays for Puritans, 1900.) Man and Superman, 1903; John Bull's Other Island, 1904; How he lied to her

Husband, 1904; Major Barbara, 1905; The Doctor's Dilemma, 1906; Getting Married, 1908; The Shewing up of Blanco Posnet, 1909; Press-Cuttings, 1909; The Dark Lady of the Sonnets, 1910; Misalliance, 1910; Fanny's First Play, 1911; Androcles and the Lion, 1912; Pygmalion, 1912; Overruled, 1912.

V

A. GRANVILLE BARKER

WORKS: The Marrying of Anne Leete, 1899; The Voysey Inheritance, 1905; Waste, 1907; The Madras House, 1909.

B. JOHN GALSWORTHY

WORKS: The Silver Box, 1906; Joy, 1907; Strife, 1909; The Eldest Son, 1909; Justice, 1910; The Little Dream, 1911; The Pigeon, 1912; The Fugitive, 1913; The Mob, 1914.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE NEO-ROMANTIC MOVEMENT IN THE EUROPEAN DRAMA

The neo-romantic drama is here surveyed as a whole for the first time. There is abundant material, however, for a study of the larger literary movement from which it sprang. The best book in English is Arthur Symons' *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (2nd ed. rev. 1908). Very useful and containing good bibliographical material is André Barre's *Le Symbolisme* (1912). Of the utmost importance are single passages and whole studies too numerous to specify (*vide*, *passim*, *e.g.*, the exquisite exercitation on faith, Vol. III, p. 329) in Jules Lemaître, *Les Contemporains* (6 vols. 1886–1896). An admirably philosophic exposition of the protest against the positivistic basis of naturalism will be found in the opening essay, *Le Pessimisme contemporain*, of Georges Pelissier's *Essais de littérature contemporaine* (1893). Further documents of capital importance are: Jules Huret, *Enquête sur*

L'Evolution littéraire (1891); Anatole France, *La Vie littéraire* (4 vols. n.d.; articles contributed to *Le Temps*, 1887–1893); Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Die Prosaischen Schriften* (2 vols. 1907) and W. B. Yeats, *The Celtic Twilight* (1893) and *Ideas of Good and Evil* (1903), now forming volumes IV and V of his *Collected Works in Verse and Prose* (8 vols., 1908 ff). Full discussion of Rostand will be found in the works of Doumic, Filon and Paul Flat cited under Chapter Two, and of Hauptmann and Hofmannsthal in the works of Meyer and Arnold cited under Chapter Three. For the rise of neo-romanticism in Germany consult A. von Hanstein, *Das jüngste Deutschland* (1901), especially Book Six. A highly specialised critical literature has grown up about the Irish movement. The chief documents are: H. S. Krans, *William Butler Yeats and the Irish Literary Movement* (1904); W. B.. Yeats, *J. M. Synge and the Ireland of His Time* (1911); F. Bickley, *J. M. Synge and the Irish Dramatic Movement* (1912); Lady Gregory, *Our Irish Theatre, A Chapter of Autobiography* (1913); Cornelius Weygandt, *Irish Plays and Playwrights* (1913). An intelligent brief account of the movement will be found in Oliver Elton's *Modern Studies*, pp. 285–320 (1907).

II

MAURICE MAETERLINCK

CRITICISM AND BIOGRAPHY: It would be unprofitable to make more than a small selection from the mass of critical material on Maeterlinck. An excellent discussion will be found in Arnold's *Das moderne Drama* (*vide supra*) and in Flat's *Figures de Théâtre contemporain*, Vol. 2 (*vide supra*). Other noteworthy studies are W. L. Courtney, *The Development of Maurice Maeterlinck and Other Studies* (1904), J. Buschmann, *Maurice Maeterlinck* (Vol. 54 of H. Graef's *Beiträge zur Literaturgeschichte*, 1908), and in Archibald Henderson's *Interpreters of the Modern Spirit* (1911). See, also, Huneker, Dukes, Hale, Henderson and Chandler. For further books, essays and articles consult the full bibliography in Jethro Bithell, *The Life and Writings of Maurice Maeterlinck* (*Great Writers*, 1913).

WORKS: La Princesse Maleine, 1889; L'Intruse, 1890; Les Aveugles, 1890; Les sept Princesses, 1891; Pélléas et Mélisande, 1892; Alladine et Palomides, 1894; Intérieur, 1894; Le Mort de Tintagiles, 1894; Aglavaine et Sélysette, 1896; Ariane et Barbe-bleu, 1901; Sœur Béatrice, 1901; Monna Vanna, 1902; Joyzelle, 1903; L'Oiseau bleu, 1909; Maria Magdaléne, 1910.

TRANSLATIONS: The eight plays from La

Princesse Maleine through Le Mort de Tintagiles were all exquisitely rendered into English by the late Richard Hovey and are obtainable in the uniform edition of 1911. Aglavaine and Sélysette is translated by Alfred Sutro (1911), Ariane and Bluebeard and Sister Beatrice, by Bernard Miall (1902), Monna Vanna, by A. I. duP. Coleman (1904), and Joyzelle, The Bluebird and Maria Magdalene, all by A. Teixeira de Mattos in 1907, 1909 (with an additional act 1912) and 1910 respectively.

III

EDMOND ROSTAND

WORKS: Les Romanesques, 1894; La Princesse lointaine, 1895; La Samaritaine, 1896; Cyrano de Bergerac, 1897; L'Aiglon, 1900; Chantecler, 1910.

TRANSLATIONS: The Romancers (Les Romanesques) is translated by Mary Hender (1899), The Princess Faraway (La Princesse lointaine), by Charles Renauld (1899), Cyrano de Bergerac, by Gertrude Hall (1898), by Gladys Thomas and M. F. Guillement (1900), by Charles Renauld (1898), and by H. T. Kingsbury (1898), L'Aiglon, by L. N. Parker (1900), and Chantecler, by Gertrude Hall (1900). All the translations deliberately give up the poetry of Rostand and are therefore practically worthless.

IV

A. GERHART HAUPTMANN

(See Bibliography of Chapter Three, Section II.)

B. HUGO VON HOFMANNSTHAL

CRITICISM AND BIOGRAPHY: In addition to the criticism of Hofmannsthal in the works cited under Chapter Three, consult E. Sulger-Gebing, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal* (1905), A. Kollmann, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal* (Vol. 47 of H. Graef's *Beiträge zur Literaturgeschichte*, 1907), and Karl Federn, *Essays zur Vergleichenden Literaturgeschichte* (1904).

WORKS: Gestern, 1891; Der Tod des Tizian, 1892; Der Tor und der Tod, 1894; Der weisse Fächer, 1898; Theater in Versen, 1899, containing: Die Frau am Fenster, 1898, Die Hochzeit der Sobeide, 1899, and Der Abenteurer und die Sängerin, 1899; Kleine Dramen 1906, containing Das Bergwerk zu Falun, 1900, Der Kaiser und die Hexe, 1900, and Das Kleine Welttheater, 1903; Elektra, 1903; Das gerettete Venedig, 1905; Œdipus und die Sphinx, 1905; Cristinas Heimreise, 1910; Der Rosenkavalier, 1911 Jedermann, 1912; Ariadne auf Naxos, 1912.

TRANSLATIONS: Death and the Fool (Der Tor und der Tod) is translated (after a fashion!) by Max Batt (Poet Lore, 1913), Electra,

by Arthur Symons, a poet of equal rank (1908). A version of The Marriage of Sobeide (Die Hochzeit der Sobeide), by B. Q. Morgan appears in Vol. 20 of the German Classics of the XIX and XX Centuries.

V.

A. WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

WORKS: The Countess Cathleen, 1890; The Land of Heart's Desire, 1894; The Shadowy Waters, 1900; Cathleen ni Hoolihan, 1902; A Pot of Broth, 1902; Where there is Nothing, 1903; The King's Threshold, 1903; The Hour Glass, 1903; On Baile's Strand, 1904; Deirdre, 1906; The Golden Helmet, 1908; The Green Helmet, 1910.

B. LADY A. GREGORY

WORKS: Twenty-Five, 1903; Spreading the News, 1904; Kincora, 1904; The White Cockade, 1905; Hyacinth Halvey, 1906; The Gaol Gate, 1906; The Caravans, 1906; The Jackdaw, 1907; The Rising of the Moon, 1907; Devorgilla, 1907; The Workhouse Ward, 1908; The Image, 1909; The Travelling Man, 1910; The Full Moon, 1910; Coats, 1910; The Deliverer, 1911; MacDarragh's Wife, 1912; The Bogie Man, 1912; Damer's Gold, 1912.

C. JOHN MILLINGTON SYNGE

WORKS: In the Shadow of the Glen, 1903; Riders to the Sea, 1904; The Well of the Saints, 1905; The Playboy of the Western World, 1907; The Tinker's Wedding, 1909; Deirdre of the Sorrows, 1910.

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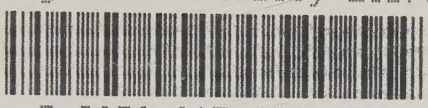
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WITHDRAWN